

**CONSTRUCTING A THEOLOGY FOR  
PENTECOSTAL - CHARISMATIC WORSHIP  
USING CALVIN'S 'UNION WITH CHRIST'**

**BY**

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## Abstract

Nicholas James Drake

*Constructing a Theology for Pentecostal-Charismatic Worship using Calvin's 'Union with Christ'*

When Pentecostal-Charismatic [P-C] theologians look for theological resources, John Calvin is rarely first choice. This thesis explores how the Reformer's theology of human participation in God through Union with Christ by the Spirit offers a rich, untapped, resource for constructing a theology for P-C worship. It moves through three key questions:

1. What is the distinct understanding of divine-human relationship captured in the instinctive praxis of Charismatic worship?
2. How does Calvin's notion of Union with Christ provide a theological grounding for, and critique of the notion of intimacy and encounter with God at the heart of Charismatic worship experience?
3. Can the dialogue between these two traditions form the basis for constructing a wider Trinitarian theology of *Christian* Worship that is a synthesis of pneumatological emphasis and Christo-centricity.

Union with Christ is found to provide a missing soteriological lens for P-C worship whilst P-C worship invites an expansion of the notion of 'visible grace' and the 'accommodation' of God in Sacrament and Word. United by their shared pneumatological emphasis, together both traditions offer a new framework for constructing a theology of worship that expands existing sacramental models. This 'Trinitarian Participatory Ontology' places both Christ and the Spirit as central to mediating human participation in God.

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Nick J. Drake

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## Abbreviations

*P-C*: Pentecostal-Charismatic Worship

### **Calvin**

*Institutes* (1559): The English translation (the 2 volume, McNeill-Battles, 1960) of the final edition will be used throughout unless otherwise noted. References will be in the body of the text following the standard format (1.3.5 being Book 1, Section 3, Subsection 5).

*Comm.*: Calvin's commentaries on biblical texts. (D.W.Torrance and T.F.Torrance (eds.) *Calvin's Commentaries*, 12 vols.)

*Sermons*: Calvin's sermons as found in *The Deity of Christ and Other Sermons*, (trans.) Leroy Nixon, 1997.

*CO*: *Calvini Opera* (*Ioanni Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*), in *Corpus Reformatorum*, (ed.) W. Baum et al, 59 vols. The original text: *CO* 41.139 being *Calvini Opera*, volume 41, column 139).

*T&T*: *Tracts and Treatises on the Reformation of the Church*, trans. H. Beveridge (ed.), 3 vols.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1. Background

If it is true that ‘to ask what is music is to ask what is human’<sup>1</sup>, then to ask what is worship is to ask what is God.<sup>2</sup> Worship is a note that resonates in the chamber of the human but originates and resolves in God. Indeed, “Worship is the vital connection between God and humankind for any significant relationship.”<sup>3</sup>

A question as to the nature of worship is therefore a question as to the nature of divine-human relationship; a sentiment echoed in Calvin’s famous opening to his *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*<sup>4</sup>:

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge<sup>5</sup> of God and of ourselves....no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God, in whom he “lives and moves” [Acts 17:28]. (1.1.1)

This study brings into dialogue two ostensibly different traditions: Pentecostal-Charismatic [P-C] worship<sup>6</sup> and the Reformed theology of John Calvin. Both traditions have substantial contributions to make to the question of divine-human relationality. P-C worship has a central

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the statement by George Steiner: “To ask ‘what is music’? may well be one way of asking ‘what is man?’” in George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> This study is particularly focused on gathered congregational worship whilst obviously being aware of the wider meaning and context of the category of Christian ‘worship’.

<sup>3</sup> Jerome Boon, "Worship and the Torah," in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016). p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1559*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (London: S.C.M. Press, 1961).

<sup>5</sup> Something more akin in contemporary terms to “existential apprehension”. See n.1, 1.1.1, Calvin, *Institutes*.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 2 will discuss the difficulty of terminology and definition, but for now we will use this broad term.

motif of ‘intimacy’ and personal encounter with the presence of God, whilst Calvin’s notion of Union with Christ contains a core notion of human ‘participation’ in the divine life.

What benefits arise when we use Calvin’s work to explore the concept of encounter and divine presence in P-C worship? Can Calvin’s theology, in fact, act as a surprising resource for establishing a normative theology for Charismatic encounter and critiquing Charismatic praxis? In turn, can P-C worship expand the actualization and experience of Calvin’s theology in and for the church? Moreover, together, can these two different traditions offer an unusual but strong foundation on which to construct a pathway to deeper ecumenical discussion around Pneumatology, Sacramentology and the shared longing for an ‘enchanted’ world where Creation participates in Divine life? These are questions, ultimately, as we shall see as to the nature of reality itself.

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The project arises out of the Anglican context of the Church of England. My own experience and background is as a ‘Charismatic’ within the Church of England, principally attending what would self-identify as ‘Charismatic-Evangelical’ Anglican churches. I have been a Worship Leader within such contexts for most of my life, and in a professional capacity for 10 years at a London church planted from the Vineyard-influenced Holy Trinity Brompton<sup>7</sup>. As well as song-writing for worship, I oversaw worship for 3 years at the Summer conferences of ‘New Wine’, one of the main Charismatic movements in the UK and I currently work with ‘Worship Central’<sup>8</sup> – a UK and global worship training school in the Charismatic tradition.

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<sup>7</sup> See [www.htb.org](http://www.htb.org)

<sup>8</sup> [www.worshipcentral.org](http://www.worshipcentral.org)

The UK Anglican context for Charismatic worship is especially interesting for two reasons: firstly, it is a very good example of the traditional (historic) church, with her wider worship tradition (a unique coming together of both Catholic and Protestant concerns<sup>9</sup>) becoming a host and partner of Charismatic worship praxis. Secondly, Anglican musicians and songwriters have been at the forefront of influencing the wider Charismatic, Pentecostal and broader Evangelical church around the world over the last two decades of the movement. For example, two of its most well-known songwriters, Tim Hughes<sup>10</sup> and Matt Redman<sup>11</sup>, have each emerged from within the UK Anglican Charismatic churches. As Thomas Smail (one of the relatively few UK theologians from within the tradition) notes: Charismatic worship “has had a transforming effect on the worship of all the churches”<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nigel Scotland observed: “There can be no doubt that the music of the Charismatic movement has profoundly influenced the music of the whole church including the mainstream Evangelical and Catholic traditions.”<sup>13</sup> The songs, and the intimate divine-human relationship they offer and express have impacted across denomination and liturgical traditions.

Although I write with this UK, Charismatic Anglican perspective, this project will incorporate and appreciate wider perspectives. This will be especially important in defining and understanding the terminology and self-description of the movement in chapter 3 where it is necessary to explore the wider frame of global Pentecostalism. The specific UK context of my

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<sup>9</sup> See for example, Mark J. Cartledge, "Charismatic Theology: Approaches and Themes," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 25, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>10</sup> Previously Worship Pastor at Holy Trinity Brompton, London and now Vicar of St Luke's Gas Street, Birmingham, UK. For more see [worshipcentral.org](http://worshipcentral.org).

<sup>11</sup> Originally from St Andrew's Chorleywood, Watford. For more see [mattredman.com](http://mattredman.com)

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Allan Smail, "In Spirit and in Truth: Reflections on Charismatic Worship," in Thomas Allan Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright (eds.) *Charismatic Renewal : The Search for a Theology*, (London: SPCK, 1993). p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> Nigel Scotland, *Charismatics and the Next Millennium : Do They Have a Future?* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995). p. 72

project's situation does not limit its applicability to other contexts but rather acts as a specific grounding to root the theology constructed here in order for it to be more widely apprehended by others.

Forty years ago, Anglican Bishop Colin Buchanan prophetically announced: "The key to the Charismatic Movement is its worship. Its influence upon the future is more significantly in the sphere of worship than elsewhere..."<sup>14</sup> Not only is the time right in this new generation to provide renewed theological foundations to the movement but also to promote its instincts as an underutilised resource for approaching wider theological questions – including, as we shall see, constructing an ontology of not only Charismatic Worship but *Christian* worship and the relationship between God and the world.

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<sup>14</sup> Colin O. Buchanan, *Encountering Charismatic Worship* (Nottingham, UK: Grove Books, 1977). p. 9.

## 2. Reasons for the study

### 2.1. *The scarcity of theological resources*

For all our talk about “grounding worship in theology” most Christians (and even Christian leaders) actually spend very little energy working at it.<sup>15</sup>

Today, in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Charismatic Worship, seen as a subset of Pentecostal Worship<sup>16</sup> is a major, if not, dominant form of congregational worship in the World church.<sup>17</sup> Its presence is ubiquitous. When seen within the context of 2000 years of church history, its growth and influence within the church has been extraordinary.<sup>18</sup>

Whilst the growth of Charismatic worship has helped the wider church to think more carefully about the role of singing within their own traditions<sup>19</sup>, ironically, Charismatics and Pentecostals have been slow to articulate their *own* theology of praxis<sup>20</sup>. Indeed, Pentecostal scholar Frank Macchia bemoans how, “the Reformed tradition has historically done a better job of cherishing

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<sup>15</sup> John D. Witvliet, page x of the preface to Leanne Van Dyk, *A More Profound Alleluia : Theology and Worship in Harmony*, The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 2 discusses the relationship between the two, including their similarities and differences.

<sup>17</sup> John Colwell notes, “it is so widespread, influential and (supposedly) ‘successful’” in John Colwell, *Promise and Presence : An Exploration of Sacramental Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005). p. 15. [cf. p.125 Paul Thigpen, “The Liturgical-Charismatic Movement,” in Robert Webber (ed.), *The Complete Library of Christian Worship Vol.2, Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship*, (Nashville, Tenn.: Star Song Pub. Group, 1994)].

<sup>18</sup> In 2004, Ian Stackhouse declared “there are few places in the Evangelical world where this hymnody is not being sung”, Ian Stackhouse, *The Gospel-Driven Church : Retrieving Classical Ministry for Contemporary Revivalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004). p. 44. Around a similar time Pete Ward observed that “Charismatic worship has become the default setting in most Evangelical churches in Britain.”, Pete Ward, *Selling Worship : How What We Sing Has Changed the Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005). p. 1. [cf. Paul Thigpen, “The Liturgical-Charismatic Movement,” in *The Complete Library of Christian Worship Vol.2, Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert Webber (Nashville, Tenn.: Star Song Pub. Group, 1994). p. 125 who writes: “For decades the Charismatic movement has been influencing the forms of worship practices in many of the older historic church. Millions of Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and others worldwide have found that the informal spontaneous, and exuberant worship style of Charismatics can bring new warmth and energy to traditional services.”]

<sup>19</sup> Scotland, *Charismatics and the Next Millennium*, p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Jonathan E Alvarado observes: “Pentecostal worship has received little scholarly attention over the past one hundred years.”, Jonathan E Alvarado, “Pentecostal Worship and the Creation of Meaning,” in Lee Roy Martin (ed.), *Toward a Theology of Pentecostal Worship*, (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016). p. 222.

the input of scholarship in the substance of worship than have Pentecostals.”<sup>21</sup> Perhaps because we are an experience-orientated tradition<sup>22</sup> it can be true, as Chris Green observes, that “the emphasis remains on the experience itself rather than on the ways that experience is *explained*.”<sup>23</sup>

This need to articulate the experience is therefore the first *raison d’être* for this project. By articulating the experience this project hopes to make a significant contribution to the theological resources available for practitioners and theorists reflecting on the tradition. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, there is a relative scarcity of theologians experienced in or at least sympathetic to the Charismatic worship tradition<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, practitioners inside the movement often see no real need to articulate praxis further as they often prioritise experience over theoretical theology and rarely move outside their tradition. Meanwhile, theologians, sacramentalists and liturgists from other traditions rarely engage with the movement academically as methodology is so problematic. Subsequently there can be little academically for theologians to engage with.<sup>25</sup>

As we shall see, when those from the wider tradition do engage, it is often extremely critical and often done in order to bolster their own defence of a more ‘reliable’ form of worship,

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<sup>21</sup> Frank D. Macchia, "Signs of Grace: Towards a Charismatic Theology of Worship," in Lee Roy Martin, (ed.), *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016). p.158.

<sup>22</sup> “The worship of Pentecostals...is not driven by doctrine or dependent upon first having correct theology. Instead [it] is experiential and dynamic.” Kimberly Ervin Alexander, "Singing Heavenly Music: R.Hollis Gause's Theology of Worship and Pentecostal Experience," in Lee Roy Martin (ed.), *Toward a Theology of Pentecostal Worship*, (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016). p. 220.

<sup>23</sup> Chris E. W. Green, "'In Your Presence Is Fullness of Joy': Experiencing God as Trinity," in Lee Roy Martin (ed.), *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016). p. 188: “Pentecostals talk often and at length about experiencing God. But because no pressing need is felt to work out a precise theological idiom for describing *how* God is present, talk about the experience remains by and large a first-order unreflective habit.”

<sup>24</sup> As we shall see this is slowly changing and is especially broadened when Pentecostal scholars are included.

<sup>25</sup> See S. R. Holmes, "Listening for the Lex Orandi: The Constructed Theology of Contemporary Worship Events," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 66, no. 2 (2013). pp.193-4.



namely sacramental<sup>26</sup> (or from the opposite stable, ‘the preaching of the word’).<sup>27</sup> Many times, as a practitioner from within the movement, one is left feeling that the writer has misunderstood the tradition entirely.

By way of example, in my own context, official Anglican theological reflection on Charismatic worship has progressed at an extremely slow pace. The Fountain Trust<sup>28</sup> was established in 1964 to facilitate Charismatic renewal within the Church of England but it took seventeen more years before the any official work was done theologically. A Synod report entitled, *The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England* finally emerged in 1981<sup>29</sup>. Ten more years passed before the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England released a statement on Pneumatology for the General Synod in response to the Charismatic renewal.<sup>30</sup>

Even then, a few years later, in 1995 James Steven was highlighting the lack of literature on the “character and significance”<sup>31</sup> of Charismatic worship, as compared to the plethora of material on the developments in the authorized liturgy for worship in the Church of England.<sup>32</sup> Despite his own excellent, case-based sociological and theological appraisal, Steven ends by inviting a, “fresh consideration of the theological horizon mediated by Charismatic worship.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See for example, Colwell, *Promise & Presence*.

<sup>27</sup> See for example, John Jefferson Davis, *Worship and the Reality of God : An Evangelical Theology of Real Presence* (Downers Grove, IL.: IVP Academic, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Peter Hocken (ed.), *Streams of Renewal*, (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1997). pp. 73-78, 115-122.

<sup>29</sup> *The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England*, (General Synod of the Church of England, CIO, London 1981.)

<sup>30</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, (Church House Publishing, London, 1991).

<sup>31</sup> James H. S. Steven, *‘Worship in the Spirit’: Charismatic Worship in the Church of England* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2002). p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> The life and work of Colin Buchanan exemplifies an Evangelical engagement with these developments, including the setting up of the Grove Worship Booklets as a continual means of commentary as well as the Journal for Liturgical Studies as a more academic engagement. See for example, Colin O. Buchanan, *Latest Anglican Liturgies, 1976-1984* (Nottingham: SPCK, Grove Books, 1985). Cf. *Anglican Eucharistic Liturgies, 1985 to 2010* (London: Canterbury Press, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> James H. S. Steven, *‘Worship in the Spirit’: Charismatic Worship in the Church of England* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2002). p. 213. In many ways, this is precisely what this projects aims to do and we will draw more from Steven’s work in the following chapters.

Now, some 40 years on, there is a strong sense from UK theologians familiar with the tradition of the pressing need for more work to be done.<sup>34</sup> Scottish Baptist Theologian, Steven Holmes observes:

Scholarly attention to the popular style of contemporary worship has so far been infrequent and generally dismissive.... it is striking how often academic discussions of Christian worship in contemporary Britain and/or America fail to notice the tradition at all.<sup>35</sup>

Where it has been done, academic work has tended to focus more on historical description rather than theological reflection on or from praxis.<sup>36</sup> In Holmes' view: "the present near-silence of scholarship does not reflect reality and does not serve the church."<sup>37</sup>

From a North American view, Sarah Koenig agrees: "despite its far-reaching influence in both Evangelical and non-Evangelical liturgical traditions, (Evangelical praise and worship) has attracted very little attention in the academy...Praise and Worship should be viewed as a new welcome manifestation of old liturgical elements...[it] is, to use Lathrop's terminology, 'the old...made to speak the new'"<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Jeremy Begbie notes: "The danger with some renewal musicians is that in rediscovering so dramatically dimensions of Christian truth and spirituality which have been stifled by others, they fail to *relate* adequately what they found to the whole truth of Christ as known in Scripture and tradition." Jeremy Begbie, "The Spirituality of Renewal Music," *Anvil* 8, no. 3 (1991). p. 233-4. He goes on to observe that "virtually no serious theological study of [UK renewal] music has been undertaken." p. 227. Begbie argues that the self-evident popularity of Charismatic worship music demands explanation and articulation from the academy, and from all disciplines: musicological, liturgical, sociological and theological.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. pp. 192, 194.

<sup>36</sup> See Ibid. n. 2, p. 193 for examples of this.

<sup>37</sup> Holmes, *Listening For The Lex Orandi*, p. 208.

<sup>38</sup> Sarah Koenig, "This Is My Daily Bread: Toward a Sacramental Theology of Evangelical Praise and Worship," *Worship* 82, no. 2 (2008). p. 142, 161 (referencing Gordon W Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). pp. 27, 81.)

Similarly, from the Pentecostal perspective, commentators such as Lee Roy Martin observe: “although Pentecostals have influenced Christian worship practices, we have been slow to take full advantage of our influential position in that area”<sup>39</sup>. Martin not only identifies the gap but knows the importance and implications of investing in constructive theologies of Pentecostal-Charismatic worship: “The scholarly study of worship is a vital theological task that affects our understanding of the nature and attributes of God, anthropology, soteriology, Pneumatology, and eschatology.”<sup>40</sup>

Such sentiment is summarised by American John Witvliet’s challenge at the end of his summary of recent research on contemporary worship: “Have we given an account of the nature and purpose of what we are doing when we gather?... How many of our conversations move beyond what we deplore in worship to our constructive, theological vision for worship?”<sup>41</sup>. Interestingly for this work, he continues by noting the crucial role a work based in the discipline of systematic theology could make to this task<sup>42</sup>.

However, this challenge of articulating the theology of praxis is often shared by other worship traditions, as Bryan Spinks observes: “although many systematic theologians indicate the importance of worship in theology, and many liturgical scholars attempt to evaluate the theologies of worship, all too frequently a great gulf still remains.”<sup>43</sup> This hints that the limited theological work on P-C worship may be to do with methodological challenges is something

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<sup>39</sup> Lee Roy Martin, "Introduction to Pentecostal Worship," in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding : Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003). p. 147.

<sup>42</sup> "From 'DNA' to 'Cellular Structure': Charting Recent Evangelical Scholarly Engagement with Corporate Worship Practices," in Melanie Ross and Simon Jones (eds.), *The Serious Business of Worship*, (London: T & T Clark, 2010). p. 204.

<sup>43</sup> Bryan D. Spinks, "Worship," in Kathryn Tanner, John Webster, Iain Torrance (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, (eds.) (Oxford, UK: OUP, 2007). p. 380.

we will pursue in Chapter 2. We shall see that methodological decisions emerge as a key facet of formulating theology for P-C worship.

In summary, there is a clear need to carry out more theological reflection within the academy on P-C worship; not only to resource those within the movement, but also to enable greater and wider inter-tradition dialogue.<sup>44</sup>

## ***2.2. Articulating a distinct understanding of divine-human encounter***

We will see in Chapter 3 that the one of the central distinctives of the tradition is the emphasis on a personal encounter with God during the time of worship<sup>45</sup>. Singing is a form of worship that enables the church to ‘experience God now’<sup>46</sup>. God becomes present and active in the assembly of believers in a particular way as they sing<sup>47</sup>. Signs of this encounter with the presence<sup>48</sup> of God are often the gifts of the Spirit, in particular tongues and prophecy, and expressive, participatory singing<sup>49</sup>. This experience is articulated by those within the movement as being the work of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the tradition has been referenced by those inside the movement and by commentators in the academy as worship ‘in the Spirit’.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “When kept in balance, a greater dialogue among the different faith traditions will yield a vibrant growth for both Charismatic and Classic Reformed churches in the future.” Levi Bakerink, “The Charismatic Renewal in the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition,” (Unpublished paper, Evangel University, 2014). p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> See e.g., A. Brown, “Charismatically-orientated Worship” in D. A. Carson (ed.), *Worship: Adoration and Action* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Paternoster Press, 1993). p. 181. [Cf. Ward, *Selling Worship*, p. 199; Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, pp. 118-130.

<sup>46</sup> A. Brown, “Charismatically-orientated Worship”, p. 185. It has been called ‘Worship of a ‘now’ God (ibid. p. 186)

<sup>47</sup> This is not restricted to the worship of ‘Charismatics’ but worship epitomizes a more generally held ‘Charismatic spirituality’. See J Goldingay, “Charismatic Spirituality: Some Theological Reflections,” *Theology* 789 (1996).

<sup>48</sup> Some within the tradition prefer ‘manifest’ presence to distinguish the phenomenon from God’s ‘omnipresence’.

<sup>49</sup> A. Brown, “Charismatically-orientated Worship”, p. 181. Ward, *Selling Worship*, p. 199; Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, pp. 118-130.

<sup>50</sup> Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*.

The ‘time of worship’ for Charismatics is therefore said to have a purpose, or goal, not merely to teach doctrine, or glorify God, but to ‘break through into the presence of God’<sup>51</sup>. Sung worship is said to “bring God’s presence close to the worshippers...an increase in the power and presence of God into the meeting”<sup>52</sup>. This notion of worship facilitating an encounter with a living, active God is typically expressed in experiential categories: worshippers talk of “the warmth of the presence within” and how worship brings “emotions and feelings...into touch with the presence of God”<sup>53</sup>. To use language that has become central to the movement, Charismatic worship enables a powerful ‘intimacy’ between God and the worshippers.<sup>54</sup>

Encountering God in such a personal way whilst also as part of a corporate wider gathering is the central motif of Charismatic spirituality<sup>55</sup> and this spirituality is incubated and manifest by the worship of the movement. To the extent that worship can even be said therefore to be the movement’s ‘*raison d’etre*’<sup>56</sup>. For some commentators, such as Ian Stackhouse, the movement would have nothing left to contribute to the wider church if such worship was taken away.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, Charismatic worship carries an infant or perhaps, better, *instinctual* understanding of divine-human relations centred on the work of the Holy Spirit. However, as we shall see in

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<sup>51</sup> Scotland, *Charismatics and the Next Millennium*, p. 64.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 68.

<sup>54</sup> A term made popular within the tradition by John Wimber and his Vineyard movement, more of which in the following chapters.

<sup>55</sup> We will explore this further in Chapter 3 but see: Mark J. Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit : The Charismatic Tradition*, Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007). Daniel E. Albrecht and Evan Howard, "Pentecostal Spirituality," in (eds.) Cecil M. Jr Robeck and Amos Yong, *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). p. 32. Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology : A Theology of Encounter* (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2008). pp. 19-27. Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit : A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999). pp. 237-5.

<sup>56</sup> Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*. p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Stackhouse, *The Gospel-Driven Church*, p. 43.

Chapter 4 going any deeper theologically than claiming that God is somehow present by his Spirit seems often to be an elusive achievement for practitioners. In particular, there is an inherent danger that, in focusing so exclusively on the person and agency of the Spirit, a more Christo-centric and Trinitarian understanding of divine-human relations is minimized or lost entirely. This need, to more fully articulate the central claim of Charismatic experience, thus becomes a second reason for the project.

From these first two reasons for the study we can formulate the primary research question: *What is the instinctive understanding of divine-human relationship captured in the praxis of Charismatic worship and how do we articulate it theologically?*

### ***2.3. Limitations of the current ‘sacramental’ lens for reading sung worship***

One of the increasingly fashionable trends in the study of Charismatic worship is to bring the sacramental tradition, with its own historic vocabulary of presence and encounter, into dialogue with contemporary worship concerns. It is thought that the sacramental category holds the necessary tools to aid understanding and critique this ‘singing-centric’ movement<sup>58</sup>. This is partly the fruit of a growing realization that P-C praxis has more in common with the mystery and presence-orientated Roman Catholic sacramentality and even Greek Orthodox Pneumatology than it does with its natural, yet rationalistic, home of Western Protestant Evangelicalism. There is, it seems, a natural shared longing in these wider traditions for the experience of the immanence of God, or what some have called, the ‘enchanted world’.

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<sup>58</sup> Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*. p. 5.

My own work in 2008<sup>59</sup>, plus Sarah Koenig's of the same year<sup>60</sup> have taken the primary lead on this area, but more recent work such as that of Hans Boersma (although not directly on sung worship) has also added to this trend.<sup>61</sup> At its heart, the pursuit of the sacramental category (as Boersma's work displays most clearly) is a project to articulate human participation in the divine and the dynamics of divine-human relationship in the world.

However, I will argue that such a lens, whilst useful to a degree, is ultimately insufficient to account for, articulate and critique fully the instinct and impulse inherent in Pentecostal and Charismatic worship praxis as discussed above. As we shall see in Chapters 5 and 9 these sacramental readings struggle to give enough weight to the specific Spirit-centric emphasis of P-C worship due to their prior-commitment to materiality acting in a mediatory capacity in the divine-human communion. The strong focus on Creation and Incarnation doctrines ultimately distracts from an awareness and inclusion of Ascension-Pentecost doctrines, thus resulting in an imbalance in understanding of ontology and mediation. Thus, using sacramental theology and vocabulary to articulate and critique the divine-human relationship displayed in Pentecostal and Charismatic worship praxis is ultimately found insufficient. An exploration of this conviction is a third reason for the study.

The question then arises as to where to go to find a theological resource that has the potential to hold both sacramental wisdom and Pentecostal Charismatic insights together?

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<sup>59</sup> N J Drake, "Towards a Sacramental Understanding of Charismatic Sung Worship: The Mediation of God's Presence through Corporate Singing," (MA Thesis, King's College London, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> Koenig, "This is My Daily Bread".

<sup>61</sup> Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation : The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2011). See also: Lester Ruth, "The Sacramentality of Contemporary Worship," in Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth (eds.) *Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2017). Peter Slade, "Lost in Wonder, Love, and Praise: Toward a Sacramental Theology of Congregational Singing," in *Annual Meeting of Theologians of Ohio* (Trinity Lutheran Seminary and Bexley Seabury, Columbus, 2014). <http://singingchurch.blogspot.co.uk/2017/03/lost-in-wonder-love-and-praise.html> Accessed 29.01.2018.

#### ***2.4. Testing the potential of reading Pentecostal-Charismatic worship in a Reformed perspective: Calvin's 'Union with Christ'***

As we have hinted at already and shall see more fully in chapter 3, Charismatic worship and spirituality, although distinct in the Anglican context, is related to the broader horizon of Pentecostal worship and spirituality.

Reformed Pentecostal scholar James K. A. Smith contends that, "Pentecostals have traditionally had an ambivalent attitude to tradition which demands to be rethought."<sup>62</sup> This project is an experiment in Pentecostal 'rethinking' – an attempt to step outside the P-C tradition in order to find resources from the riches of the wider Catholic-Reformed or 'Great' tradition to fund the construction of theological reflection and resource for the contemporary church.

Such a methodological direction however has not been made without debate within Pentecostal circles. D. Lyle Dabney, for example, argues that the theological categories of other traditions need to be first discarded in order for Pentecostalism to articulate its own implicit theology<sup>63</sup>. Similarly, Kenneth J. Archer states: "The theological categories [of other traditions] are often at odds with the implicit theology of Pentecostalism"<sup>64</sup>. Whilst to some extent this could be said to be true, this thesis will share more of Hesselink's perspective<sup>65</sup> that ultimately the inherent 'genius' of Pentecostal spirituality can only be most fully articulated by a retrieval of theological insights from other traditions. Traditional theological categories may well need to

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<sup>62</sup> James K. A. Smith, "What Hath Cambridge to Do with Azusa Street? Radical Orthodoxy and Pentecostal Theology in Conversation," *Pneuma* 25, no. 1 (2003). p. 100.

<sup>63</sup> D. Lyle Dabney, "Saul's Armor: The Problem and Promise of Pentecostal Theology Today," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 23 (2001). pp. 115-17.

<sup>64</sup> Kenneth J. Archer, "A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology: Method and Manner," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 3 (2007). p. 303.

<sup>65</sup> I. John Hesselink, "The Charismatic Movement and the Reformed Tradition," in D.K.McKim (ed.), *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).



be stretched, expanded and redefined in the light of ‘Pentecostal instinct’, but not discarded altogether. Moreover, Pentecostal instinct may need precisely such stretching itself when read in the light of wider Christian tradition.

Smith is correct, in this regard, to highlight the ‘simply Christian’ aspects of Pentecostal theology:

There are elements of a Pentecostal worldview that are, one might say, “simply Christian”; that is, I don’t see these aspects of Pentecostal spirituality as optional additions to Christian faith. Pentecost is in the DNA of the holy, Catholic, apostolic church. Insofar as the Pentecostal and Charismatic renewal has reminded the church of her Pentecostal heritage, *Pentecostal spirituality is a Catholic spirituality*.<sup>66</sup>

It is the claim of our study that the ‘simply Christian’ elements of a Pentecostal worldview and experience require ‘simply Christian’ discussion – i.e., a drawing from the wider Christian tradition rather than purely P-C material<sup>67</sup>. The project will therefore reach out beyond the natural well-trodden borders of constructing a ‘Pentecostal’ or ‘Charismatic’ theology such as Wesleyan holiness or 20<sup>th</sup> Century Western Evangelicalism<sup>68</sup>. Moreover, as Archer argues, it is important to note that: “Pentecostalism is more than the sum total of all the contributing theological antecedents that it embraced, absorbed, or rejected, and then transformed into a

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<sup>66</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues : Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*, Pentecostal Manifestos (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010). p. xviii. Italics my own.

<sup>67</sup> It is widely acknowledged that such narrow sources for theological reflection are insufficient to explain the complexities involved in the origins of Pentecostalism.

<sup>68</sup> See for example, Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, Studies in Evangelicalism (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1987). Also, David W. Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel : The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). For an interesting discussion see Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit : A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006). pp. 28-33. For Evangelical roots see also Archer, *A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology*, pp. 302-4.

distinct tradition”<sup>69</sup>. The project is therefore, in part, an experiment in exploring wider theological horizons to find a constructive theology for P-C instinct.

A shift has occurred in recent years precisely towards more inter-tradition dialogue between the wider Reformed tradition and Pentecostal Theology. Building on the work of Levi Bakerink<sup>70</sup> several trends in this direction can be identified:

Firstly, more Reformed theologians seem to be embracing Charismatic spirituality and making it their own<sup>71</sup>: “Today, more Reformed theologians are willing to reconsider previously held pneumatological beliefs than ever before.”<sup>72</sup>. Bakerink cites the examples of James K A Smith himself and his provocatively titled article, “Teaching a Calvinist to dance” in which Smith states: “being Charismatic actually makes me a better Calvinist; my being Pentecostal is actually a way for me to be more Reformed.”<sup>73</sup>

Secondly, many Charismatics in non-denomination churches are (re)discovering more traditional forms of worship (liturgical and sacramental), many of which are (neo-)Reformed versions of the Catholic tradition. Two anecdotal examples of this are the Praxis conference that has emerged in North America over the last few years<sup>74</sup> and the movement of mega churches such as Willow Creek and New Life in Colorado Springs embracing more liturgical and sacramental forms of worship.<sup>75</sup> These American examples are not so much re-discovering, but discovering for the first time Anglican (which in and of itself is a version of a Reformed-

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<sup>69</sup> Archer, *A Pentecostal Way*, p. 304.

<sup>70</sup> Bakerink, *The Charismatic Renewal*.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 12

<sup>73</sup> James K. A. Smith, "Teaching a Calvinist to Dance," *CT* 52, no. 5 (2008). p.42.

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.praxisconference.com>

<sup>75</sup> ‘The Practice’ gathering under Aaron Niquiest at Willow Creek – a contemporary liturgical service centered weekly round ‘The Table’; Cf. New Life Downtown, Colorado Springs, under Glenn Packiam.

Catholicity) liturgical practice and theology. Here in the UK, of course, Charismatic worship within Anglican churches is in the unique position of having been adopted into an existing Reformed-Catholic tradition.

Thirdly, as Bakerink identifies, there is a ‘renewed emphasis on ecumenism’<sup>76</sup> more widely in the church. Here in the UK, the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic church has seen a seismic shift in recent years which holds much promise; moreover, Charismatic forms of worship are now at the forefront of Anglican church planting across the UK<sup>77</sup>. Meanwhile wider afield the relationship between Pentecostalism and Reformed traditions is being allowed space to grow for the first time.<sup>78</sup> This is due to two factors: firstly, Pentecostalism has arguably matured as a theological movement and, secondly, Reformed thinkers have had time and distance to reflect more fully on what, in earlier generations, became a battle front fixated on cessationism and gifts of the spirit<sup>79</sup>.

These trends, bringing together worldviews which had previously been happy to stay well apart, may well be due to a growing realization that surprisingly both traditions share a particular emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>80</sup> Mung Yong Kim is very useful here in comparing and contrasting Reformed Pneumatology with Pentecostal Pneumatology<sup>81</sup>. For

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<sup>76</sup> Bakerink, *The Charismatic Renewal*, p. 13.

<sup>77</sup> See the recently formed, ‘Church Revitalisation Trust’. <https://crtrust.org>

<sup>78</sup> See Bakerink, *The Charismatic Renewal*, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> For example, most (in)famously the work of Presbyterian and Princeton Theologian B. B. Warfield *Counterfeit Miracles* (1918). A more recent example being Anthony A. Hoekema of Calvin Theological Seminary: Anthony A. Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

<sup>80</sup> I. John Hesselink observes: “the Charismatic movement...is above all a movement that stresses and magnifies the personality and power of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the Reformed tradition - at least certain strains of it - has placed great emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.” Hesselink, “The Charismatic Movement and the Reformed Tradition,” in D.K.McKim (ed.) *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 378. Likewise, Kim references Calvin as having a ‘pneumatological emphasis’ in his theology of sacraments and church. Myung Yong Kim, “Reformed Pneumatology and Pentecostal Pneumatology,” in Wallace M. Alston and Michael Welker (eds.) *Reformed Theology : Identity and Ecumenicity*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), p. 172.

<sup>81</sup> p. 181 onwards. His actual proposal (based in part on Moltmann) is weak and disappoints after the promise of his excellent analysis.

Kim, Reformed Pneumatology has a broader understanding of the work of the Spirit (in salvation, in ecclesiology for example) than Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions<sup>82</sup>. An analysis that Hesselink agrees with: “in Reformed theology there is a greater appreciation, deeper understanding, and more comprehensive and balanced presentation of the full power and work of the Holy Spirit than in any other tradition, including the Pentecostal tradition.”<sup>83</sup> However, Reformed Pneumatology has arguably limited the freedom of the Third Person by tightly connecting the Spirit’s work to the historical Christ, Scripture, and the institution of the church.<sup>84</sup> Thus, “Reformed Pneumatology is weak on individual-spontaneous aspects of the Holy Spirit”<sup>85</sup>.

The weakness of Pentecostal Pneumatology, Kim goes on to argue, is its neglect of the broader perspective of Reformed understandings of the Spirit’s work, especially to do with soteriology<sup>86</sup>. In Hesselink’s summary, the Charismatic movement does not:

..stress the work of the Holy Spirit too much, but too little! Its viewpoint is too narrow and myopic...The Charismatic theologians have much to learn from Calvin in particular and the Reformed tradition in general.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>83</sup> Hesselink, “The Charismatic Tradition”, p. 378.

<sup>84</sup> Kim, “Reformed Pneumatology and Pentecostal Pneumatology”, p. 173.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p.174. This, ‘eclipse of Pneumatology’ in Reformed theology is one of the major reason for the oft quoted lack of attention in the Academy until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the person and work of the Spirit. Pneumatology, in the view of Dutch Theologian Henrikus Berkhof has been a “neglected field” for systematic theology. H. Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Annie Kinkead Warfield Lectures (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1964). p. 10.

<sup>86</sup> Kim, “Reformed Pneumatology and Pentecostal Pneumatology”, p. 174 and pp. 178-181.

<sup>87</sup> Hesselink, “The Charismatic Tradition”, pp. 383-4. Cf. Occasionally Pentecostal theologians do mention wider sources, for example in Lee Roy Martin: “Luther restored the doctrine of justification by faith; Wesley restored the doctrine of sanctification; and the healing movement restored the doctrine of healing in the atonement.” Lee Roy Martin, "Introduction to Pentecostal Worship," in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, p. 3. The Reformation gets mentioned here at least, but still no mention of the main protagonist for our project, John Calvin.

The project thus aims to capitalize on this window of opportunity that has opened up in Reformed-Pentecostal ecumenical dialogue. By bringing Charismatic worship and Reformed theology (centered on a particular element of Calvin's theology) into conversation the project will partly be an exploration of Hesselink's hypothesis that the Charismatic tradition stresses the work of the Spirit not too much but too little with a limited narrow framework for the person and function of the Spirit in worship. Is the role of the Spirit in soteriology something missing from P-C worship theology?

A second research question thus emerges: *can the Reformed tradition, in particular Calvin's notion of Participation as Union with Christ provide a new and fruitful theological resource for the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition?* Is there a deeper and wider understanding of Pneumatology available by reading the 'narrow' Pneumatology of the Charismatic tradition through the lens of the 'broader' Pneumatology of the Reformed tradition? Do Charismatic theologians indeed have 'much to learn' from Calvin?

## ***2.5. Strengthening Pentecostal theology***

One final reason for the project remains: the need to offer a unique pentecostal and Charismatic voice to broader theological questions.

In recent decades, Pentecostal scholarship has grown in confidence to utilise insights, born from praxis, for constructing unique theological perspective. Dabney, for example, challenges Pentecostal theologians to have confidence in their own unique voice and the "implicit

theological impulse” of Pentecostal spirituality<sup>88</sup>. This self-confidence is particularly highlighted in Archer’s article ‘A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology’. Archer argues Pentecostalism is not merely an adjective as deployed in ‘Pentecostal Evangelicalism’, but “an authentic Christian tradition in action and thought”<sup>89</sup>. Similarly, Terry Cross argues that Pentecostal insight is not merely an add-on to mainstream theology:

While Pentecostals share many theological tenets in common with other Christians, we have experienced God in ways others do not confess. Rather than viewing theology as a descriptive of our distinctives, we need to understand the all-encompassing difference which our experience of God makes in every area of our lives.<sup>90</sup>

More recently Smith has amplified this call for self-confidence in pentecostal-Charismatic scholarship. He invites Pentecostal scholars to ‘drink from their own wells’<sup>91</sup>: “Pentecostal scholarship is not just “Evangelical” scholarship + a Pneumatology, but there is a unique ‘genius’ implicit in Pentecostal spirituality that should yield a distinct and integral philosophy”.<sup>92</sup>

This project ultimately is a response to this renewed call for ‘Pentecostal Confidence’. It will be a contribution to the wider theological academy, working unapologetically from what Smith calls a Pentecostal [perspective] “[one] whose imagination has been informed by the embodied

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<sup>88</sup> D. Lyle Dabney, "Saul's Armor: The Problem and Promise of Pentecostal Theology Today," *Pneuma* 23 (2001), p. 141.

<sup>89</sup> Archer, *A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology*, p. 305.

<sup>90</sup> Terry Cross, "The Rich Feast of Theology: Can Pentecostals Bring the Main Course or Only the Relish?," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16, no. April (2000), pp. 33-4.

<sup>91</sup> Based on Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells : The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll, N.Y. Melbourne, Australia: Orbis Books, Dove Communications, 1984).

<sup>92</sup> Smith, *Thinking In Tongues*, p. xiii.

rhythms of Pentecostal worship and spirituality.”<sup>93</sup> Following Smith<sup>94</sup> my hope is not to merely ‘intellectualize’ Charismatic worship.<sup>95</sup> Rather, to progress through constructive theology the self-understanding and ecumenical potential of this ‘unique genius’ (Smith), ‘instinctive impulse’ (Dabney), or ‘Pentecostal spiritual intuition’<sup>96</sup> found within the spirituality of the movement and manifest within the praxis of its worship.

Thus, my aim is ultimately to make a P-C contribution to *Christian* theology, and in particular Christian worship theology in the discipline of systematics. *What does the unique ‘genius’ of P-C spirituality as particularly displayed in worship praxis, yield for the theology of Christian worship?*

The project carries a tension thus, between Pentecostal ‘confidence’ to ‘drink from our own wells’ and Pentecostal ‘humility’ – recognising that such wells are filled by a deeper water table shared by other generations and other traditions. This project can be judged successful if in some way it baptises 21<sup>st</sup> century P-C experience in the deeper river of (Catholic-)Reformed theology. And vice versa.

## 2.6 Summary

If Pentecostalism (including Charismatic praxis) is primarily a *spirituality*”<sup>97</sup>, what Land calls an “integration of beliefs and practices in the affections which are themselves evoked and

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., *Thinking In Tongues*, p. xx.

<sup>95</sup> As Mark Cartledge points out, Charismatic spirituality should be understood as a unique hermeneutic in and of itself - see pp. 125-31 of Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit : The Charismatic Tradition*.

<sup>96</sup> Daniela C. Augustine, "Liturgy, Theosis, and the Renewal of the World," in Lee Roy Martin (ed.), *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016), p. 167.

<sup>97</sup> Smith, *Thinking In Tongues*, p. xix.

expressed by those beliefs.’<sup>98</sup>. The aim of this project is to articulate the theology that is latent within P-C spirituality expressed in worship practice. More precisely the understanding of who God is and how he interacts with worshippers by the agency of the Holy Spirit in particular. To make explicit what is implicit in Charismatic spirituality, to articulate the ‘sound’ of encounter. All of this by creatively bringing into dialogue two ostensibly very different traditions.

To summarise we have three prime research questions

1. What is the distinct understanding of divine-human relationship captured in the instinctive praxis of P-C worship and how can it be articulated theologically?
2. Can the Reformed tradition, in particular Calvin’s notion of Union with Christ provide a new and fruitful theological resource for the P-C tradition? A theological grounding for and critique of Charismatic experience?
3. Can this dialogue between Charismatic experience and Calvin’s notion of Union with Christ ultimately fund a Pentecostal confidence to speak into a wider theology of *Christian Worship* – funding a Trinitarian ‘ontological framework’<sup>99</sup> for worship that expands existing sacramental models?

Now the reasons for the project have been established it is important to briefly clarify outline the shape of our approach.

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<sup>98</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 13. For helpful discussion on ‘Charismatic spirituality’ see Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit : The Charismatic Tradition*. pp. 28-30.

<sup>99</sup> Davis calls for a “new framework for perceiving reality itself” – the ontological frame “within which worship takes place”. Davis, *Worship and the Reality of God*, p. 13.



### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. *Constructive theology: a logic and grammar for Charismatic worship*

The study of Pentecostal and Charismatic worship straddles multiple disciplines, from musicology, sociology, phenomenology through to biblical, liturgical and systematic approaches and everything in between. No single study could cover the entirety of approaches or claim to be comprehensive, and so it is critical that a work such as ours makes clear its own methodological approach.

The project is a work of constructive theology sitting in the discipline of systematic theology. It is neither a historical work on Calvin nor empirical research on contemporary worship. It aims to build a theology prompted by praxis but established in systematics. The project will show that underneath the validity of musicological approaches and ethnographic work, lies other deeper theological questions to do with the nature and purposes of God himself as he relates and works in the world. The end conclusions may well benefit from testing through empirical research, but that will lie outside the bounds of this project. This is a work of creative theology.

As we shall see in Chapter 2 descriptions of praxis are important, but constructive theologies of praxis are equally important (if not more so at this time<sup>100</sup>) in progressing the church's understanding of its worship. I hope to be able to offer some foundations for the construction of an interpretative framework for Charismatic worship. Moreover, it is hoped this study, in being situated firmly within the theoretical, theological and constructive role, will eventually

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<sup>100</sup> Often projects working on P-C worship praxis and ritual fail to go further than description to offer theological reflection. Elliott for example has three chapters of description for just one chapter of interpretation and theological discussion (E. Elliott, "Worship Time. The Journey Towards the Sacred and the Contemporary Christian Charismatic Movement in England" (Ph.D., The University of Nottingham (United Kingdom), 1999)). Steven's *'Worship in the Spirit'* is an excellent and rare example of doing both in a balanced way.

act as a suitable dialogue partner for studies from other disciplines, such as those emerging from the new category of congregational studies<sup>101</sup>.

### ***3.2. Theology of retrieval***

We shall see in chapters 6 and 7 how Calvin's description of what divine-human communion is - participation in God by Union with the risen Christ and his emphasis on the work of the Spirit in facilitating this relationship - make him a significant resource for the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition.

Participation in God through Union with Christ is what the project will therefore focus on as its Reformed component. To do this will involve journeying through some wide-reaching elements of Calvin's theology including Christology, Anthropology and Pneumatology before focusing in on his Sacramentology and prayer to help clarify his theology of Union with Christ and how 'grace is made visible'.

Such a project as this, combining two traditions, would be far too large for a single thesis and so we will focus particularly on several recent readings of Calvin's Union with Christ, particularly where they help reveal his understanding of human participation in divine life. The works of Calvin scholars Todd Billings<sup>102</sup> Julie Canlis<sup>103</sup> and Philip Butin<sup>104</sup> all share a

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<sup>101</sup> See Mark Porter, "The Developing Field of Christian Congregational Music Studies," *Ecclesial Practices* 1 (2014).

<sup>102</sup> J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>103</sup> Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder : A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010).

<sup>104</sup> Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response : Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

commitment to historically sensitive articulation of Calvin's theology of Union with Christ but with an emphasis on its potential to speak to contemporary horizons.

Our study is therefore situated in part in the method of theological 'retrieval'<sup>105</sup> which holds as foundational the truth that "the Christian tradition is cumulative, and its theology does not start *de novo*"<sup>106</sup>. Building on the work of Webster, as well as Allen and Swain<sup>107</sup>, I define theology of retrieval for the purposes of this study as the rereading of past sources of Christian theology, granting them authority to speak into, displace, affirm and revitalize current theological claims.

Using the retrieval method enables Calvin to be read as a 'conversation partner'<sup>108</sup> with P-C worship. The result will be an interesting and unpredictable conversation and the "possibility of seeing...the world itself with 'new eyes'"<sup>109</sup> that will fund our task of constructive theology.

#### 4. Outline

In summary, this study focuses on the divine-human relationship so central to the praxis of P-C worship and found in Calvin's notion of Union with Christ. In particular it focuses on the

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<sup>105</sup> Retrieval is a form of theology which by "immersion in the texts and habits of thoughts of earlier theology opens up a wide view of the object of Christian theological reflection." John Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval," in J. B. Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain R. Torrance (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). p. 584. Theologies of Retrieval pay particular attention to the immediate circumstance of the constructive work as well as looking back and relating the current work to "the longer trajectory of the Christian tradition." Ibid., p. 583. For a brief overview of trends towards retrieval in theological method see pp. 4-12 of Michael Allen and Scott R Swain, *Reformed Catholicity : The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015).

<sup>106</sup> Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval", p. 590 referencing David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination : Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981). pp. 99-154.

<sup>107</sup> John Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval"; Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*.

<sup>108</sup> Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, p. 2. Cf. J Todd Billings, *Union with Christ : Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011). p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> Billings, *Union with Christ*, p. 5.

experience of the presence of God as ‘intimacy’ in Charismatic tradition and the notion of Participation in the divine life as Union with Christ in Calvin’s theology

It is an attempt to build a creative theology built on the conviction that questions of worship ultimately are questions of the nature of God. Moreover, it is a project that experiments by looking outside of the P-C movement towards the Reformed tradition for theological resourcing. However, it will maintain in tension with this retrieval, a ‘Pentecostal Confidence’ to trust the instinctual, ‘inchoate sacramentality’<sup>110</sup> and experiential emphases of P-C tradition.

The project proposes that reading the motif of intimacy in Charismatic worship in the context of Calvin’s theology of Union with Christ, offers the possibility of a truly ‘wider Pneumatology’ than the ‘narrow Pneumatology’ offered by phenomenology-focused self-understandings of Charismatic practitioners. Charismatic worship theology can be enriched by adapting and deepening its notion of encounter to a wider Reformed understanding of the work of the Spirit in relating the worshipper to Christ – a form of soteriology *applied*. At the same time, P-C instinct for an experiential mode of theology can challenge Calvin’s own limited ability to apply his theology to Church praxis by displaying in its form an extension of ‘grace made visible’.

Such a wider, more generous ‘Pentecostal-Reformed’ Pneumatology offers the possibilities for significant cross-tradition dialogue, and greater integration of Charismatic praxis and theology with wider worship traditions. Calvin’s work thus offers a pathway to ecumenical discussion around the shared longing for an ‘enchanted’ or ‘sacramental’ world. It ultimately offers the pathway towards an ontological framework for worship born out of the fusion of P-C practice

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<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Scotland, *Charismatics and the Next Millennium*, p. 73.

and Reformed theology: a ‘Trinitarian Participatory Ontology’. This is more than merely a non-cessational view of the gifts of the Spirit built on ‘TULIP’ doctrinal foundations (as is often associated with the phrase ‘Charismatic-Calvinist’<sup>111</sup>, but rather a richer, wider understanding of the person and work of the Spirit in facilitating our experience of the life of God through placing us in the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. It is a Trinitarian mediated, Christo-centric, Pneumatological form of Participation in the divine life.

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The project is split into two halves. Part 1 focuses on the contemporary horizon of P-C worship. Whilst Part 2 moves on to explore Calvin’s theology of Union with Christ before ending with constructive work. Method is such an important area for research into contemporary congregational worship that the whole of the opening chapter (Chapter 2) is given over to it. Chapter 3 sets out to define Charismatic worship through careful examination of the language used to define the tradition, and by setting the context of the wider horizon of Pentecostalism. Key facets of the implied theology of the movement are revealed, principally the emphasis on the dynamic, immanent presence of God. The form of Charismatic worship will also be outlined because of its ability to point to the ‘hidden’ beliefs and expectations of the worshippers. The ritual expressions of P-C worship are not peripheral but turn out to be key identifiers of the core spirituality. Chapter 4 moves on to survey existing theological work on the tradition, identifying key opportunities and challenges.

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<sup>111</sup> For contemporary critiques of this understanding of a ‘Charismatic-Calvinist’ (mainly a North American niche discussion) – see for example: <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/TM13-4/calvins-critique-of-Charismatic-> and, <http://www.challies.com/liveblogging/strange-fire-conference-steve-lawson>. Accessed 29 Jan 2018.

Chapter 5 investigates how both the sacramental and Charismatic forms of worship share the same longing for an ‘enchanted world’ of creaturely participation in the divine. We will see how a sacramental form of ontology is ultimately insufficient grounding for the experience of divine presence claimed by P-C praxis. This will close Part 1 of the project.

Part 2 opens with a short piece introducing the reader to the shift in focus: ‘Calvin, Charismatics and Commonality’. We then delve deeper over two chapters into Calvin’s theology of Participation as Union With Christ, firstly focused on the Christological basis in Chapter 6 before moving onto the Pneumatological basis and connected themes in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 is the beginning of our constructive work – bringing both traditions into conversation addressing themes such as mediation, divine immanence, and notions of presence raised in part 1.

Chapter 9 explores the deeper questions exposed by our project to do with reality itself and the ontology of *Christian* worship. We end the project with a discussion around Pentecostal-Reformed ontology and propose a hypothesis for a Trinitarian Participatory Ontology as a way of accounting for the experience claims of P-C worship in the light of Calvin’s Union with Christ. This proposal combines the epicleptic form of Pentecostal-Charismatic worship and the Christological frame offered by Calvin’s work. This is our Pentecostal contribution to the wider theology of worship.

Finally, Chapter 10 locates our findings back into some of the areas raised in this introduction and asks some concluding questions as to future opportunities.

## **Part I**

## **Chapter 2: Forging a Method for Constructing a Theology for Pentecostal-Charismatic Worship**

### **1. Congregational studies**

Even the most cursory sweep of literature on worship using terms such as ‘Contemporary’, ‘Charismatic’, or ‘Pentecostal’ reveals a plethora of different methodological approaches. The study of Contemporary worship (of which Pentecostal and Charismatic worship is a part) is an increasingly popular and multi-disciplined area of work.

It hasn’t always been so. Congregational music “has often been pushed towards the margins of the various disciplines that it inhabits.”<sup>1</sup> This is partly due to the historically uneasy relationship between music and theology – each keeping the other at arms-length to some extent. As Elvis Costello famously once said: ‘to write about music is to dance about architecture’. How do we write and therefore attempt to formalize what is a complex, living, experiential (divine-)human activity?

One of the challenges for theologians has been to agree on what precisely it is about congregational worship that they should grasp? Theologians historically deal with texts<sup>2</sup> but sung worship is a multi-layered praxis. So when it comes to studying any element such as the experience of the congregation in worship, the task becomes slippery to the theologian and ends up in the musicologist or social scientists’ hands who are then often lacking the theological frame to interpret their ethnographic or phenomenological observations. The result is often, as

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<sup>1</sup> Porter, “The Developing Field of Congregational Studies”, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> This is the particular challenge of music-centric contemporary worship. Perhaps this is why sacramental and liturgical theology are so much more attractive to study as they have very obvious core focuses for the theologian – the sacramental elements or the liturgical texts.



Webster and Jones observe, that “the study of church music...has fallen between several disciplinary stools”.<sup>3</sup>

Jeremy Begbie is a rare example of both musician and theologian whose life and work embodies a marriage of music and theology. Again and again, Begbie has pointed out the importance of not building theologies of worship purely based on the words of songs as if the music setting was of no consequence: “to ignore the theological impact of music is surely a mistake...music imprints its own meaning, however hard this is to articulate.”<sup>4</sup>

Applying the old methods of analyzing texts alone (which relates to a formational and educational view of the goal of congregational worship more than a presence-orientated, encounter view)<sup>5</sup> is not sufficient for understanding the heart of contemporary worship<sup>6</sup>. Alan Luff, Secretary of the Hymn Society observes:

It has long been a concern of mine that we in the Hymn Society would come to grips with what is happening in the Pentecostal movements. We tend to look at their songs and to judge them purely in the way we would judge a traditional hymn, and whereas surely some of the criteria apply, there must be reasons why a huge number of our fellow Christians take up a kind of song that we normally would not touch.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ian Jones and Peter Webster, "The Theological Problem of Popular Music for Worship in Contemporary Christianity," *Crucible* July-September (2006). p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Begbie, "The Spirituality of Renewal Music", p. 230. Cf. p.227: In Begbie's article on renewal music, he quotes Alan Luff, Secretary of the Hymn Society, which is worth quoting in full here:

<sup>5</sup> More of this in the proceeding chapters.

<sup>6</sup> An example of this is the fact that the sole study on major UK movement Worship Central is purely based on lyrical content: Chris Anthony, "Spirit Break Out: Examining the Theological and Musical Development of Worship-Central",

[https://www.academia.edu/7214441/Spirit\\_Break\\_Out\\_Examining\\_the\\_theological\\_and\\_musical\\_development\\_of\\_Worship\\_Central](https://www.academia.edu/7214441/Spirit_Break_Out_Examining_the_theological_and_musical_development_of_Worship_Central). Another example of a predominantly text-based approach looking at the Australian Hillsong movement is Tanya Riches, "Shout to the Lord! Music and Change at Hillsong: 1996-2007" (Australian Catholic University, 2010). <http://researchbank.acu.edu.au/theses/308/>.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Luff quoted in Begbie, "The Spirituality of Renewal Music", p. 227.

As we shall see, P-C songs have a different primary *telos* (goal) – to be vehicles for personal and corporate encounter with God. They are not doctrine set to music, but more art pieces that invite, enable and lead the participant to another world. They act, rather like the Narnia wardrobe, as a doorway into the ‘strange new world’ of God.<sup>8</sup>

The UK-based Baptist theologian, Steven Holmes, is an example of a scholar recognizing the shift needed in methodological approach to such congregational worship. He argues that many studies make the mistake, for example, of not grasping the significance of the whole time of worship rather than looking at individual songs<sup>9</sup>. The block of worship is a collection of songs, as well as other elements (prayers, readings, art)<sup>10</sup> which, Holmes argues, “together construct a liturgical narrative with theological and pastoral depth”.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Holmes makes an important point: “The appropriate liturgical unity to be analysed and criticized is the [whole] time of worship, not the particular songs used within it.”<sup>12</sup>

It is not just a methodology that constructs and critiques theology purely on the texts of worship that can be a mistaken endeavour. The same danger exists for approaches focused exclusively on the music of worship.<sup>13</sup> Through surveying musicologist approaches to worship, Mark Porter observes that, “in reading them one can often be struck by the absence of the congregation”.<sup>14</sup> The actual practice of the congregation is key – their expectations, values and beliefs, even their *a priori* theology. Others in the musicology arena, such as Dan Randel, have

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<sup>8</sup> A phrase used of the Bible by Barth.

<sup>9</sup> He bases this premise on the work of Lathrop, *Holy Things*. More of which later.

<sup>10</sup> Holmes, “Listening For The Lex Orandi”, p. 196.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 192

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 196.

<sup>13</sup> Porter, “The Developing Field of Congregational Studies”, p. 152. Porter argues this is the danger of the purely musicological approach, offered by those such as Begbie, which have “tended to privilege the existence of music as an art form rather than as congregational practice”.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 150.

argued that the particularities of the music event ('place, audience, performance') also matter.<sup>15</sup>

This is beginning to be reflected in recent phenomenological studies of sung worship such as that by Gordon Adnams who concludes: "too often, studies have focused on the song, not the singing...the experience of singing is avoided."<sup>16</sup>

The experience of contemporary worship, whilst needing more attention from within the Academy, does receive attention from myriads of practitioners and participants online and (to a lesser extent now) in print. This growth of contemporary worship globally, alongside similar developments in communications technology, has resulted in numerous blogs, articles, videos, and podcasts all dissecting, discussing, critiquing such worship.

However, as Porter notes, often this reflection is without critical self-examination – either due to a lack of awareness of other traditions, lack of theological training, or simply because the priority of such authors and organisations is to resource the church practically, rather than theologise praxis.<sup>17</sup> Mark Evans argues that church music praxis has thus, "lagged sadly behind in the world of critical enquiry", being stuck at the level of "manuals and 'how-tos'".<sup>18</sup> Jones and Webster agree, noting, "'How-to' manuals on worship have tended to focus particularly on the state of mind and heart of the worship leader, rather than engage in theological reflection."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Dan Michael Randel, "The Canons in the Musicology Toolbox," in Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (eds.), *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1992). p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon Alban Adnams, "The Experience of Congregational Singing: An Ethno-Phenomenological Approach" (PhD University of Alberta, 2008). p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Porter notes the work of two organisations in the UK in particular who are contributing here: The Royal School of Church Music in the UK, and within Charismatic circles, Worship Central. Porter, "The Developing Field of Congregational Studies", p. 152.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Evans, *Open up the Doors : Music in the Modern Church*, Studies in Popular Music (London ; Oakville: Equinox, 2006). p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Jones and Webster, "The Theological Problem", p. 10.

It is clear then that to study congregational sung worship comprehensively demands a wide range of disciplines, and that music, lyric, performance, place, belief and expectation all play their part. There is now a growing realisation, in part due to the explosion of P-C worship, that assessing or articulating theology from or through worship praxis means more than simply analysing the texts or the music.<sup>20</sup> It is in the *performance* (to use a musical term without attributing any theological weight to it) of the songs that something hard to define happens that is crucial to Charismatic worship: a personal experience of the presence of God. In the performance *is* the theology.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. Worship as (informal experiential) theology

Following the logic of this analysis, some theologians from within the tradition, such as Mark Cartledge, argue for the need to place Charismatic ‘theology’ in the discipline of ‘practical theology’ more than the traditional academic locus<sup>22</sup>. This observation is shared by other Pentecostal theologians, although named differently. For Hollenweger, P-C worship is an ‘oral’ theology, whereas for others such as Frank Macchia, ‘oral’ is too restrictive a term. Macchia offers instead a notion of ‘non-academic’ theology – not as a negative term or a suggestion of a ‘substandard’ theology but merely a way of referring to the inherent orality and devotional character of Pentecostal thought.<sup>23</sup> Archer prefers ‘pietistic’, finding Macchia’s suggestion too negative.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “A written or printed text is always only a score awaiting performance”... “[worship] is something to be done or performed”. Spinks, *Worship*, p. 381.

<sup>21</sup> Charismatic experience has been said to be the ‘theological language’ of the movement. See the classic Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals; the Charismatic Movement in the Churches*, 1st U.S. ed. (Minneapolis,: Augsburg Pub. House, 1972). Cf. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, pp. 49-57.

<sup>22</sup> “It is important to note that Pentecostal and Charismatic theology at the popular level does not follow the canons of theological discourse because its media are song and testimony not creed and doctrinal treaty.” Cartledge, *Charismatic Theology*, p. 178. Cf. For a fuller discussion and more references see Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit : Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology*, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2010). pp.15-16.

<sup>23</sup> Such thought (in particular, early Pentecostal work) he claims is not critical, rationalistic or systematic.

<sup>24</sup> Archer, *A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology*, p. 308.

What is clear is the recognition that P-C worship theology is carried in the sound of the songs, the bodily expression of the worshippers, the volume of the prayers in the room. It is, as Archer summarises, “an affective experiential theological tradition” where worship becomes the “primary way of doing theology.”<sup>25</sup>

This methodological debate is not exclusive to contemporary worship forms but exists in the wider worship tradition. As a liturgical scholar, Aidan Kavanagh locates ‘*theologia prima*’ in the worshipper. In worship the believer is confronted with the reality of an experience of God which becomes the substance of consequent reflection. This reflection on primary experience becomes ‘*theologia secunda*’.<sup>26</sup> Crucially for Kavanagh, *theologia prima* is not a mere half-way posting on the way to the specialist reflection that is *secunda theologia*. The worshipper<sup>27</sup> is the theologian precisely because she is experiencing the deep reality, that is God himself. Commenting on this notion, Bryan Spinks writes: “Week by week faith is built up by this continuing encounter... this is the source and substance of most Christians’ theology.”<sup>28</sup> David Fagerberg agrees with Kavanagh that this experience of encounter in worship is true ‘primary theology’ - a theology which is “more fully clothed than bare propositions.”<sup>29</sup>

Kavanagh, Fagerberg, and P-C scholars, thus share an emphasis on the church at worship as in and of itself ‘theology’. It is in some way the ultimate actuality of ‘knowing God’ – ‘*theology*’.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 309.

<sup>26</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology : The Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1981* (New York: Pueblo Pub. Co., 1984). p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> Kavanagh’s fictitious ‘Mrs Murphy’.

<sup>28</sup> Spinks, *Worship*, p. 379.

<sup>29</sup> W. Fagerberg David, "What Is the Subject Matter of Liturgical Theology?," *Roczniki Liturgiczno-Homiletyczne, John Paul II University, Lublin, Poland* 1, no. 57 (2010). p. 49.

If the church at worship simply *is* theology, then why attempt to ‘write’ theology at all? This project is an attempt to take *both* ‘modes’ of theology absolutely seriously - validating the experience-orientated praxis of P-C worship whilst recognizing the need to articulate this experience in a ‘secunda’ world of theological vocabulary.

Although the project rests in ‘secunda’ territory, such secondary reflection is not a diminishing of the importance of the experience of the worshipper but actually a heightening of the importance of this experience. Our methodology is one of moving to *secunda theologia*, precisely in order to give P-C experience-orientated spirituality the weight it deserves in the academic (traditionally ‘secunda’) arena. By evolving an experiential mode of theology to a *written* experiential mode of theology, academic and ecumenical discussion is made more possible. Moreover, articulating the insights of P-C worship within the discipline of systematic theology can actually offer a crucial contribution to a wider theology of *Christian* worship.

In this regard, the categories Rowan Williams proposes of ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ theology help expand this methodological direction:

Informal theology is “the preconscious reflection, the ordering of experience, that is constantly going on in the Church.”<sup>30</sup> It is the existing praxis of P-C worship, the beliefs and expectations of the congregations, the vision and prayers for congregational worship of the worship leaders. Formal theology is the attempt to form “reflectively consistent speech for God”<sup>31</sup> out of such praxis.

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<sup>30</sup> Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). p. xiii.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p.xii.

This framework is helpful for two reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges the validity and importance of worship *as* theology. Williams writes: “the theologian is always beginning in the middle of things. There is a practice of common life and language already there.”<sup>32</sup> Secondly, for Williams, such an affirmation of the reality of *prima* theology does not need to diminish the need to articulate such an experience embedded theology. Moreover, Williams helpfully identifies the occasion for moving from such ‘informal’ theology to ‘formal’:

The theologian emerges as a distinct and identifiable figure when these meanings have become entangled with one another, where there is a felt tension between images or practices, *when a shape has to be drawn out so that the community’s practice can be effectively communicated*.<sup>33</sup>

Worship in the P-C tradition has reached such a moment as Williams describes. It is maturing precisely by means of articulating the boundaries of the ‘shape’ of its praxis that has now emerged; by reflecting on its rapid growth and expansion, and by formalizing its thought.<sup>34</sup> This is, as Williams identifies, a most important move as it allows for the first time the community’s practices to be effectively communicated, in particular to those outside (or on the edge looking in) of the movement. It also allows critical self-reflection.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. xii.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Whilst Cartledge essentially identifies the same developments as Williams, he differs in approach by suggesting that a ‘Charismatic theology’ can and should sit happily in ‘practical theology’, in some way acting to redefine what ‘proper theology’ is: “[There are assumptions] that theology is only or primarily done by ‘professional theologians’. Charismatic theology challenges this assumption at its root by a radical egalitarianism of the Spirit.” Cartledge, *Charismatic Theology*, p. 186.

<sup>35</sup> Wainwright uses the example of Marion worship to argue for the necessity of *theologia secunda* to sometimes correct misshapen doxologies. He argues that although worship is a “crucial source for systematic theology” it nevertheless, “needs the rigour of theological study to discipline its rhetoric.” Wainwright, *Doxology*, p. 379.

This is the context of Charismatic worship *within* the Anglican church today. It has a ready-built community of watchers, looking on through the windows. Its boundaries and walls are not permanent but flexible and pervious. And yet, without the ability to communicate well across tradition, *trans*-tradition, it lacks the ability to effectively integrate or spread more widely. Perhaps more accurately, it lacks the discernment of direction that only historical awareness and theological rootedness brings. This is then a key part of the challenge of this project: to capture a moment in liturgical development, and ‘formalise’ its theology.<sup>36</sup>

This ability to communicate well and to relate to the wider church *at* worship and *in* theology is crucial if P-C worship is to contribute to any wider discussion around Christian worship. This is the progression the project will make. Whilst beginning as a proposal of a means by which we can articulate the inherent encounter-orientated spirituality of P-C worship it will end by asking what this articulation can offer to a wider theology of Christian worship and divine-human relationship (Chapter 9).

Of course there are dangers to such a method. Williams warns of a likely corollary being the loss of some of the elements of the original ‘unsystematized’ informal theology. However, it is my belief that, both the need to find a constructive language and logic for Charismatic worship’s distinct understandings of divine-human relationship and the opportunities such an articulation will bring to the wider discipline of worship theology, invites a cautious but bold attempt to construct ‘secunda’, ‘formal’ theology for Charismatic worship. Ultimately the goal is to find ‘reflectively consistent speech for God’, rooted in the wider tradition, birthed from the instinct and ‘genius’ of P-C worship praxis.

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<sup>36</sup> As Fagerberg summarises: “The Church’s liturgy is a theological act, and after it has been done it can be talked about.” Fagerberg, “What is the subject matter of Liturgical Theology?”, p. 48.



It is clear then that the study of P-C worship is becoming a complex and multi-layered task. For a comprehensive understanding of its praxis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century a truly multi-disciplinary approach is needed, including from disciplines as wide ranging as congregational studies, ritual studies, liturgical studies, social science and ethnography<sup>37</sup>. However, one crucial missing piece in this conversation is any notion of a contribution from systematic theology<sup>38</sup> and any sense of an approach that attempts to *prescribe* rather than describe; to build a theology from the nature of God rather than specific question of worship. In an excellent summary of recent research on contemporary worship, John D. Witvliet notes the valuable contribution such a constructive work based in the discipline of systematic theology could make<sup>39</sup>. This study hopes to provide just such a contribution to the rapidly expanding multi-disciplinary conversation.

There is one final piece to our explanation of methodology and it comes from the discipline of liturgical studies.

### **3. Towards a 'formalised' theology**

Attempting to formalize the theology of P-C worship is not only about grounding a present day experiential reality in the wider theological tradition but also about critiquing and reshaping

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<sup>37</sup> Ingalls, Landau and Wagner in their book 'Christian Congregational Music' express the need for, "collaboration across methods, disciplines and backgrounds", Monique Marie Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, and Thomas Wagner, (eds.), *Christian Congregational Music : Performance, Identity and Experience*, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), p. 11. Cf. Porter: "It is...this intersection of perspectives which marks out the field as one with a great deal of latent potential". Porter, "The Developing Field", p. 165.

<sup>38</sup> Warrington, p. 16 for example notes: "Rather than describe or explain doctrines in the mode of systematics or dogmatic theologians associated with the seminary and scholar, they [P-C practitioner] typically explore them in the biblical narrative and by the testimony of those affected by them."

<sup>39</sup> John D. Witvliet, "From 'DNA' to 'Cellular Structure': Charting Recent Evangelical Scholarly Engagement with Corporate Worship Practices," in *The Serious Business of Worship*, ed. Melanie Ross and Simon Jones (London: T & T Clark, 2010). p. 204.

that praxis. The relationship between primary and secondary theology, oral and written, is ultimately two-way. Insights from the liturgical tradition suggest that, by rooting our articulation of the central motif of P-C praxis in the very nature of God and his revealed relationship with the world, a normative shape for P-C worship can be explored.

We will draw from the work of Max Johnson<sup>40</sup> as well as David Fagerberg<sup>41</sup> – each offering us transferable insights learnt from the deep well of liturgical thinking<sup>42</sup>. Johnson surveys the recent quest for establishing a ‘norm’ for Christian worship, and the associated discussion around setting criteria for assessing worship as authentically Christian. He centers on the work of three liturgists: Gordon Lathrop<sup>43</sup>, James White<sup>44</sup>, and Paul Bradshaw<sup>45</sup>. Fagerberg offers us a reading of two great liturgists: Alexander Schmemmann and Aidan Kavanagh, asking the deeper questions about the very nature of theologizing worship.

Firstly, is it possible to form some kind of normative shape or theology for P-C worship: criteria that “constitutes or elucidates” authentic worship;<sup>46</sup> norms which might “establish, govern and critique the celebration of Christian worship in the various churches today.”<sup>47</sup> Lathrop’s *ordo* is an attempt to do so for traditional Eucharistic worship<sup>48</sup>; White’s four-fold principles<sup>49</sup> are

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<sup>40</sup> Max Johnson, "Can We Avoid Relativism in Worship? Liturgical Norms in the Light of Contemporary Liturgical Scholarship," *Worship* 74 (2000).

<sup>41</sup> David W. Fagerberg, *What Is Liturgical Theology? : A Study in Methodology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992). David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima : What Is Liturgical Theology?*, 2nd ed., Studies Series (Chicago, Ill.: Hillenbrand Books, 2004).

<sup>42</sup> The details of their work in reading each of these liturgical studies perspectives aren’t directly relevant for our study, but there are some key insights from their work that are useful for sharpening our methodology and focusing our research.

<sup>43</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*.

<sup>44</sup> James White, "How Do We Know It Is Us?," in E. Anderson and B. Morrill (eds.), *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch before God*, (Collegeville: Pueblo, 1998).

<sup>45</sup> Paul Bradshaw, "Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology," *Pacifica* 11 (1998).

<sup>46</sup> Johnson, p. 140.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 145.

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid.* pp. 145-6 for critique of this model and p. 147 for a positive assessment.

<sup>49</sup> Survival, coming together in Christ’s name, expectation of encounter, variety of forms. For a summary see *ibid.* pp. 140-141.

an answer for affirming more contemporary non-eucharistic worship services. How could we go about constructing criteria from which to read and authenticate P-C worship? In Johnson's analysis of Lathrop's *ordo*, Johnson suggests this is a pressing need:

It would seem that the burden of proof actually falls *not* on those churches who defend an inherited *ordo* of some sort but on those who, for whatever reason, have chosen to separate themselves from that 'ecumenical or historical standard',<sup>50</sup>

Bradshaw however insists there is no such thing as 'the' liturgy of the church and suggests being cautious of any liturgical fundamentalism<sup>51</sup>. This is not only true from a historical perspective, he argues, but also in the multiplicity of meaning that occurs in rituals such as worship<sup>52</sup>. He wants to remind us of the need to patiently listen, observe and *describe* the church at worship: "there is a much too ready tendency to move from *description* to prescription" in liturgical theology".<sup>53</sup> This is a theme that Johnson judges White to be also sympathetic towards - "For White, there are really no universal liturgical 'norms', no universal *ordo*, which may be abstracted or deduced which *prescribe* what it is that *the* church *should* do as normative and regular practice in its liturgical assemblies."<sup>54</sup>

However, against this position, Johnson articulates a key methodological move that we will adopt similarly for this project:

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 149.

<sup>51</sup> Bradshaw, pp. 184-5

<sup>52</sup> He uses the work of the Jewish Liturgist Lawrence Hoffman for this – the fourfold private, official, public, and normative meanings.

<sup>53</sup> Bradshaw, p. 186.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, p. 141.

Unless liturgical theologians are to be nothing other than chroniclers of history, or sociological and/or anthropological ‘observers’, there must be some room for theological prescription as well. If not, the study of liturgy itself might just as well be moved out of theology departments altogether and into those of history, anthropology, sociology, and/or psychology<sup>55</sup>

Johnson’s move is to point reflections on the worship of God to questions of the nature of God. By situating the discussion about normative and authentic worship in this horizon, Johnson can argue that, “in such a context, prescriptive statements have always been and will continue to be necessary.”<sup>56</sup>

Similarly, Fagerberg broadens the definition of ‘liturgical theology’ away from the mere *how* of worship practice:

The term ‘liturgy’ can mean the complex of official services, all the rites, ceremonies, prayers, and sacraments of the Church, ...and while this is an accurate definition, it is too small a definition.<sup>57</sup>

Rather, the goal is to describe and reflect upon the “deeper reality that lies below the ceremonial surface.”<sup>58</sup> The aim of a theology of worship is thus to also ask what the worshippers are connected to. What lies beneath the surface of worship: the *what* of worship.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 154.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 151.

<sup>57</sup> Fagerberg, p. 42.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

For Fagerberg, this worship experience is an appropriation of the ancient Patristic understanding of theology as ‘participatory vision’ - a “making meaning from direct experience”.<sup>59</sup> Liturgical theology, he suggests, is “participatory knowledge” of the Trinity.<sup>60</sup> Articulating this deep reality at the heart of worship is thus a central, valid task for liturgical theology, and it must inherently involve systematic theology, as the content of this mystery is named as the God revealed in Scripture as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>61</sup>

Fagerberg’s major move is in shifting the subject matter of liturgical theology away from the liturgy of the church towards the source and goal of the church, God himself. Once this shape of hermeneutic is established, the task of theologizing the church at worship becomes the task of describing God in his very being and activity – more precisely, the relationship between God and the world he has made. In Fagerberg’s words: “The massive reality that undergirds our ceremonies and services turns out to be the same reality that supports our existence”<sup>62</sup> Christ is the light of the world, and the articulation of his presence in the world as “liturgical light”<sup>63</sup> is the task of theologizing worship. Worship is where the world is transformed in this light.

This theme is also found in the work of liturgical scholar Fr. Jean Corbon who also focuses on this deeper reality behind worship:

[There is a] confusion, hardly realised, between liturgy and liturgical celebration... It is even shared by fervent leaders of the liturgical renewal, who focus their entire effort

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 48.

<sup>61</sup> Fagerberg goes on to identify this deep reality in the liturgy of the church as the perichoretic dance of the Trinity. Worship itself, the relationship between God and the world, is somehow initiated and situated in the eternal will of the Godhead. See Fagerberg, p. 44.

<sup>62</sup> Fagerberg, p. 49.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

on the celebration and its forms and expressions, the life of the assembly, the texts and movements, the singing and active participation of all. It is necessary, of course, that attention be given to all these; but sometimes *they forget what is being celebrated*, as if it could be taken for granted.... *The channels have been repaired but what about the fountain?*<sup>64</sup>

Corbon invites us to make the subject of liturgical studies, of theologies of worship, God himself. He that is being celebrated. He that is the ‘fountain’, the ‘source’, and ‘wellspring’. Like Fagerberg, Corbon identifies this ‘fountain’, the reality at the heart of worship as, ‘the all-embracing event of Christ’, which is, in totality, “the mystery of the Triune God in Incarnation, Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, Pentecost”.<sup>65</sup>

Corbon therefore calls us to avoid the entrapment of purely phenomenological, ethnographical and other methodologies focused on the observable facts of the worship celebration. The West in particular, he claims, has been obsessed with “questions of efficacy and causality with sacraments”<sup>66</sup>

It seems that the vision with which all these groups start focuses exclusively on liturgical phenomena. But why not begin with the hidden reality, the liturgical mystery? It is possible that a certain type of sacramental theology, the legitimate heir of long centuries of reflection, plays a distorting role in this area.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Jean Corbon, *The Wellspring of Worship*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005). p. 24.

<sup>65</sup> Corbon and O’Connell, p. 25. Cf. This is what Schmemmann suggests too in his definition of Liturgical Theology as: “the search for words appropriate to the nature of God”. Alexander Schmemmann and Asheleigh E. Moorhouse, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Library of Orthodox Theology (Portland, Maine: American Orthodox Press, 1966). p. 14.

<sup>66</sup> Corbon and O’Connell, p. 25.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

This is a wider theme found in other liturgists. Lathrop himself agrees: “It is no longer sufficient to discuss the meaning of ‘Roman Catholic ritual’ or ‘Lutheran liturgy’...such explaining can and must be undertaken ecumenically.”<sup>68</sup> Similarly Andrew Cameron-Mowat identifies the need to go deeper - beyond current “events and concerns”<sup>69</sup>.

Whilst not denying the importance of observational, descriptive work and the multi-disciplinary approach to studying P-C worship espoused by Porter *et al*, if we respond to Corbon, Fagerberg and Johnson and make the study of God himself the gateway into the theology of worship, we are driven to systematic theology, asking questions of the very nature and being of God in relation to his world, as the prime methodology for our study. Only once this deeper move has been made do we have significant foundation to then ask whether any kind of liturgical *reform* should be considered by a particular liturgy (such as P-C worship). This is the constructive theological task of our study, as equally valid and necessary as the sister task of descriptive observational ethnography.

This task leads ultimately to an even deeper question than questions of how we worship, or how we should *think* about worship, to – what is a good articulation of orthodox Christian worship? The pathway towards a theology of P-C worship must involve at its heart an articulation of the nature and activity of God himself as revealed, and crucially how this God encounters and relates to his Creation.

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<sup>68</sup> Lathrop, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Andrew Cameron-Mowat, "Liturgical Theology: Who's in Charge?," *Way* 35, no. 4 (1995). p. 334. Johnson also argues for the need to dig deeper into systematic theology and think cross-discipline: “[we need]...a particular theological understanding of God and how God acts incarnationally and sacramentally in history and the church....Such a basic theological perspective about the very nature of God’s encounter with humanity can certainly not be abandoned”. Johnson. p. 151.

In conclusion, this project will offer a foundation for the construction of an interpretative framework for P-C worship - a pathway towards a trinitarian ontology that can begin to 'establish, govern and critique' Charismatic worship..

#### **4. Conclusions: the nature of God and his (ongoing) encounter with humanity**

We have seen how any one study such as this one, has to acknowledge its own strengths and weaknesses as it takes its place sitting at a multi-disciplinary table, in the shared pursuit of articulating P-C worship praxis and spirituality. We have also seen how this movement's worship practice - whether one sees it as Hollenweger's 'oral' and 'dramatic' theology or Cartledge's 'enacted' theology - challenges the very definitions and methodology of traditional written, 'academic' theology. It is the hypothesis of this study that ultimately P-C worship has the potential as a praxis (a dramatic, sometimes unscripted, liturgy with an experiential reality in the life of the believer) to articulate a truly *Christian* (Catholic-Reformed) and orthodox<sup>70</sup> theology of worship.

Before we move now to the constructive task in Part II, it is important to identify the core insights of this praxis. Definitions, terminology and the 'informal' theology of P-C worship are the themes to which we now turn in Chapter 3.

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<sup>70</sup> According to the witness of biblical and creedal tradition.



## Chapter 3: Singing to Encounter

### 1. Introduction

Among the great merits of the Charismatic movement is the way in which it takes seriously the capacity of the Holy Spirit to transform lives in the here and now.

(Doctrine Commission, Church of England, 1991)<sup>1</sup>

P-C Worship has been summarised as “Worship of a ‘now’ God”<sup>2</sup>. It has been identified by those inside the movement and by commentators in the academy as worship ‘in the Spirit’.<sup>3</sup> Between these two observations lies a core central value and belief of P-C Worship practitioners: that God is present and active in the gathering of worship and it is possible to encounter him by means of his Spirit. Charismatic Scholar Mark Cartledge writes:

At the heart of Christianity there is and should be an encounter with the Holy Spirit. This encounter is free, spontaneous, dynamic, transformative and should be an ongoing experiential reality within the purposes of God.<sup>4</sup>

As we shall see in this chapter, encountering the presence of God, understood as the work of the Holy Spirit, is the central motif of Charismatic spirituality.<sup>5</sup> This distinctive is displayed in

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<sup>1</sup> Doctrine Commission, Church Of England, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, (London, CHP 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Brown, p. 186. Cf. “Most Charismatics do not consider that the church exists either to remember the past or to anticipate the future. Both of these activities happen, but fundamentally the church is called to experience God now.” p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*.

<sup>4</sup> Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit : The Charismatic Tradition*. p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 32.

its praxis and places my specific context of Anglican Charismatic worship in a wider Pentecostal world-view. It also acts as a core distinguishing feature between P-C worship and other seemingly similar forms of contemporary worship. Encounter with the presence of God by his Spirit is the key paradigm of worship for the P-C worship tradition.

## **2. In historic context: Charismatic worship in the Church of England**

It is not too exaggerated a claim to state that in the UK, the influence of ‘Charismatic’ or ‘Charismatic-Evangelical’ worship has been seismic. In little over half a century the worship rituals experienced by many church-goers have arguably changed more dramatically than in any period since the Reformation. Three current networks of influence, each of which share the form of ‘Charismatic worship’, have emerged which between them impact the vast majority of traditionally Evangelical churches in the UK. These movements are New Wine, Soul Survivor and Holy Trinity Brompton (including Alpha International and, until recently, Worship Central<sup>6</sup>). It is possible to include the current Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, as a fourth current major influence on the UK Anglican church and globally the Anglican Communion, as his own faith and world view were also ‘birthed’ out of the Charismatic renewal of the Church of England in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Being aware of this historical background to the emergence of the praxis is a crucial component of describing and defining what the distinctives of this form of worship are.

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<sup>6</sup> Now based at Gas Street Church, Birmingham ([www.gasstreet.org](http://www.gasstreet.org)).

Throughout the 1960s and 70s, as the ‘century of the Spirit’<sup>7</sup> reached maturity, the phenomenon<sup>8</sup> of Pentecostalism<sup>9</sup> began to influence the mainline churches in earnest.<sup>10</sup> This ‘Charismatic renewal’ of Catholic and Anglican churches was “the Pentecostal experience but within the boundaries of mainline churches”<sup>11</sup>. This marriage of Pentecostalism with its oral evolving liturgy and Anglicanism with its written historic liturgy could be said to be a very odd marriage,<sup>12</sup> with each having very different historical roots and expressions of worship forms.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Leo XIII prayed the "Veni Creator Spiritus" and consecrated the 20th Century to the Holy Spirit on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901. The exponential rise of Pentecostalism including the Charismatic impact on mainline denominations is commonly referred to subsequently as part of the ‘century of the Spirit’. See, for example, Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit : 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> As a distinct denomination it has been described as “the change in Christianity’s centre of gravity.” Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History : Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh: Orbis Books ; T & T Clark, 1996). p. 13. As a category of Christian faith it is now said to embrace nearly 500 million worshippers – nearly one quarter of all Christians in existence. See Ingalls and Yong (eds.), *The Spirit of Praise*, p.1. As one commentator writes: “It’s growth from zero to 400 million in ninety years is unprecedented in the whole of church history.” Walter J. Hollenweger, "From Azusa Street to the Toronto Phenomenon: Historical Roots of the Pentecostal Movement," *Concilium* 3 (1996). p. 3. For more narration and statistics on the growth see: Grant McClung, *Azusa Street and Beyond : Pentecostal Missions and Church Growth in the Twentieth Century* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Pub., 1986).

<sup>9</sup> We will discuss issues of definition later but for a baseline see: ‘The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements’, in S. M. Burgess and G. McGee (eds.), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 1-6. For the best intro for defining the ‘Charismatic’ movement: Hocken, The Charismatic Movement, in S. M. Burgess and G. McGee (eds.), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 130-60.

<sup>10</sup> See studies such as Michael Harper, *As at the Beginning: The Twentieth Century Pentecostal Revival* (Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, England, 1974). And John T. A. Gunstone, *Pentecostal Anglicans*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982). Gunstone defines the Charismatic-Anglican as being “influenced by classical Pentecostal teaching and practice”. p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> M. Klaver, “Worship Music as Aesthetic Domain of Meaning and Bonding: The Glocal Context of a Dutch Pentecostal Church”, in Ingalls and Yong (eds.), *The Spirit of Praise*, n.1 p.111. Cf. This is in line with Cartledge’s focused use of the word ‘Charismatic’ to refer to “any who adopted central features of Pentecostal spirituality...but from within a different theological tradition such as Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy.” Cartledge, *Charismatic Theology*, p. 178. It is crucial to see Charismatic worship as part of “globally circulating pentecostal styles of worship”. Klaver, p. 98.

<sup>12</sup> “Pentecostalism emphasizes the orality of faith through testimony and song rather than articles of faith and canon law.” Cartledge, *Charismatic Theology*, p. 271.

<sup>13</sup> For the North American perspective on this shift see Lester Ruth and Swee Hong Lim, *Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017). pp. 124-131. A ‘blending’ occurred of Pentecostal forms of worship with traditional Evangelical forms: “The style, songs, structure, and ethos of Pentecostal music and worship became increasingly prevalent in non-Charismatic Evangelical churches in the US beginning in the early 1980s”. Splittler calls this the ‘pentecostalization of evangelicalism’: Russell P. Spittler, "Are Pentecostals and Charismatics Fundamentalists? A Review of American Uses of These Categories," in Karla Poewe (ed.), *Charismatic Christianity as Global Culture*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press: 1994). p. 112.

One of the main changes brought about by this marriage in practice was an adoption (primarily through the musical worship practices) of the spirituality of Pentecostalism without a wholesale embrace of associated ‘Pentecostal’ theologies such as the ‘baptism in the spirit’<sup>14</sup>. Often such emphases on the centrality of a ‘crisis experiences of being over-whelmed by the Spirit’<sup>15</sup> were maintained but without the sharp boundaries that can result from classical Pentecostal doctrine. This hybrid resulted in the development of alternative terminology to the ‘baptism in the Spirit’ axiom. Charismatics within the Anglican church articulated the work of the Spirit on the worshippers as ‘being filled with the Spirit’ and encouraged believers to be open to ‘receive’ the Spirit.<sup>16</sup> Contemporary music and new songs became a key conduit for this new emphasis in a ‘Charismatic’ spirituality.

This alternative terminology and associated praxis of a ‘relaxed’ Pentecostalism became the grammar for the so called ‘Third Wave’<sup>17</sup> movement of the 80s and 90s<sup>18</sup>. This era saw an intensification and massive growth in Charismatic worship within the Anglican church in the

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<sup>14</sup> From an Anglican perspective, Steven, for example notes: “Over time, Charismatics related baptism in the Spirit to their received theologies of initiation, and so distanced themselves from the Pentecostal teaching that baptism in the Spirit was a second blessing following conversion”. Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Cartledge, *Charismatic Theology*, p. 178.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Harper, *Walk in the Spirit* (London,: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968). p. 20. This same fusion occurred in other context such as North America - by way of illustration, Mall’s study of the Anchor Fellowship in Nashville, USA tells a very similar story of a mix of Pentecostal emphases and historic Evangelical theology and praxis which results simply in “a theology that values spiritual gifts, and a form of worship that puts music central”. The Anchor Fellowship is now a church of “renewal oriented worship, theology and praxis”. Andrew Mall, “‘We Can Be Renewed’; Resistance and Worship at the Anchor Fellowship” in Ingalls and Yong (eds.), *The Spirit of Praise*, p. 163.

<sup>17</sup> A term attributed to C. Peter Wagner, Fuller Theological Seminary. The Vineyard, for example, did not insist on tongues as a sign of Spirit baptism – see: Don Williams, “Charismatic Worship”, in Paul Basden (ed.), *Exploring the Worship Spectrum* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004), p. 142. For more see Kevin Springer, *Riding the Third Wave* (Hankt, UK: Marshall Pickering, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> This was not only happening in the UK and in the Anglican church but in the Catholic Church in Europe (the “Catholic Charismatic Renewal” – see, for example <http://ccr.org.uk>) and in the Dutch church (see Klaver in Ingalls and Yong). Cf. Birgitta J. Johnson, “‘This Is Not the Warm-Up Act!’: How Praise and Worship Reflects Expanding Musical Traditions and Theology in a Baptical Charismatic African American Megachurch” in Ingalls and Yong (eds.), *The Spirit of Praise*, pp. 117-132. Johnson notes in her study of Faithful Central Bible Church, LA that it does not consider itself Pentecostal but a ‘Third Wave’ church: “the ‘area of freedom’ common among Third Wave churches concerns the recognition of spiritual gifts but not the privileging of one gift over another” p. 123.

UK principally due to the influence of one Californian man – John Wimber of the Vineyard movement of ‘Third Wave’ churches<sup>19</sup>, who, as we shall see held a key articulation of this new form of worship. Wimber crucially affirmed the hybrid of Charismatic praxis and Evangelical theology<sup>20</sup> which enabled “spirit-filled praxis to [come to] existing congregations without uprooting their theologies”.<sup>21</sup>

This Vineyard understanding of worship, articulated in the ministry of John Wimber, is key to understanding UK Anglican Charismatic worship of the last 30 years.<sup>22</sup> Its impact has been seismic as we have seen, with currently at least three dominant networks of influence currently existing within the Anglican church, each principally defined by its worship<sup>23</sup>, which can directly be traced back to the Charismatic spirituality and worship that flourished with the influence of John Wimber and his Vineyard church in the 80s and 90s.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to note however that Wimber arrived in England some 20 years after initial Charismatic experiences emerged in the UK church. See for example, Elliott. p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic), pp. 149-151.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Mall, “‘We Can Be Renewed’: Resistance and Worship at the Anchor Fellowship” in Ingalls and Yong (eds.), *The Spirit of Praise*, p. 176, n. 1. Cf. For how the Charismatic renewal resulted in the theology and ministry of existing mainline churches’ being empowered and renewed: Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson, *Empowered Evangelicals : Bringing Together the Best of the Evangelical and Charismatic Worlds* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Vine Books, 1995). p. 34.

<sup>22</sup> Both James Stevens and Esther Elliott highlight the need to pay attention to the difference between the sociological and theological senses of the term (see especially Chapter 3 of Elliot “The History and Social Organisation of the Charismatic Movement in Britain”). Sociological, theological and historical factors all contribute to the task of describing Charismatic worship in the Anglican context. For a good example of sociological commentary on the wider movement see: Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton, and Tony Walter, *Charismatic Christianity : Sociological Perspectives* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> Although it could be argued that the HTB Alpha Course is the defining feature of the HTB network of church plants, it is the key component of sung worship and the priority placed on this practice during the axiomatic ‘Holy Spirit Weekend’ that makes this course so unique and moves it from being a purely didactic teaching model, to an emersive, holistic, invitation to an experiential spirituality.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas McBrain notes: “The impact of Wimber’s teaching and ministry on the renewal movement has been enormous. He has remained the central figure from the early 1980s through to the present day.” Hunt, Hamilton, and Walter. p. 55.

The sociologist Stephen Hunt narrates this shift in his work ‘The Anglican Wimberites’<sup>25</sup>, identifying the ‘Third Wave Conference’ of 1984 at the Methodist Central Hall as the beginning of the ‘Wimberization’ of Evangelical Charismatics within the Anglican tradition.<sup>26</sup>

The first Vineyard in the UK began in 1987, and illustrative of the strong link between Anglican Charismatics and Wimber’s Vineyard, four of the first English Vineyard leaders were previously ordained leaders in the Church of England.<sup>27</sup>

The Vineyard view of worship was transmitted through personal relationship and friendship between John Wimber, who personified in his teaching and ministry ‘Vineyard’ theology and values, and several key Charismatic Anglican leaders, including David Pytches of St Andrew’s Chorleywood, David Watson of St Michael le Belfrey, York, John and Ele Mumford, and Sandy Millar of Holy Trinity Brompton.<sup>28</sup> The result was a shift in the forms of worship experienced by worshippers at Anglican churches that had adopted Charismatic praxis:

The influence of John Wimber upon the Church of England meant that not only were Vineyard choruses in vogue but authorized liturgy was abandoned. Instead, the Vineyard liturgy of songs and choruses followed by a sermon and the time of ministry

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<sup>25</sup> Stephen Hunt, "The Anglican Wimberties," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 17, no. 1 (1995).

<sup>26</sup> See Ibid. p.105. Hunt observes, “the extraordinary impact Vineyard has made not only upon the New church scene in Britain, but upon Charismatics in the Anglican church” in Stephen Hunt, “Doing the Stuff: The Vineyard Connection”, in Hunt, Hamilton, and Walter. p.78. From this moment on, not only did Vineyard values and theology infiltrate the Anglicans but also the house church ‘Restorationist’ movement, including New Frontiers and Ichthus. See, for example, Anthony O’Sullivan, "Roger Forster and the Ichthus Christian Fellowship: The Development of a Charismatic Missiology," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 16 (1994). For more on this history see also the excellent resource: William K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks of Britain : New Ways of Being Church*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Milton Keynes ; Waynesboro, Ga.: Paternoster, 2007). It is important to note that whilst the Jesus Movement was happening as a precursor to Vineyard in California, the UK had its own early Charismatic movements such as ‘the Fisherfolk’ (originally from North America) of St Michael-le-Belfrey and the creative arts and theatre group ‘Riding Lights’ both of which flourished under the ministry of Charismatic Anglican David Watson. For more on this see, p. 54 in Elliott.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.65.

<sup>28</sup> See Hunt. p. 10 for example.

has become the norm in many Anglican churches, thus making them indistinguishable from the Vineyard denomination, except perhaps for the building.<sup>29</sup>

Theologically, Wimber's 'Kingdom Theology'<sup>30</sup> was much more easily acceptable, Hunt argues, to pre-existent Anglican Charismatic theology than other movements of the time.<sup>31</sup> In particular the clear distinction between the 'now' and the 'not yet' which protects against any over-realised eschatology, whilst encouraging prayer for more of the Kingdom come, the movement of the Spirit here on earth in heavenly ways.<sup>32</sup> Elliott too notes:

Wimber offered the English Charismatics a fairly well thought out... understanding of the connection between the behaviour of the church of the New Testament and the behaviour of the contemporary church as well as an understanding of God which emphasised the availability of the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup>

She goes on to observe that Wimber's openness and generosity in both theology and ecclesiology "did much to strengthen the Charismatic desire to be a movement within a diverse expression of faith and not to become a faction."<sup>34</sup> This orientation towards ecumenicalism is a key distinctive of Charismatic Anglicanism<sup>35</sup> which is: "inherently ecumenical in vision, with

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<sup>29</sup> Cartledge, "Charismatic Theology: Approaches and Themes." p. 276.

<sup>30</sup> Based on the work of George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom; Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1959); *Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (London.: S.P.C.K., 1966).

<sup>31</sup> For more on Wimber's distinctives compared to the 'Second Wave' see: Joseph T. Zichterman, "The Distinctives of John Wimber's Theology and Practice within the American Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement" (Ph.D., Trinity International University, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> See Hunt. p. 114.

<sup>33</sup> Elliott. p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 64. As Steven points out, it is important to distinguish also between Charismatic worship as part of a wider Charismatic movement within the historic denominations (such as Anglican), which seeks to bring spiritual renewal to the life of the church, and Charismatic worship as developed 'ex nihilo' so to speak, external to any existing church structures and traditions. Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Pentecostalism, in contrast, has tended to be a separate denomination, an alternative reality to the traditional church. Hocken claims this was true from the start because the first Pentecostals believed the second coming was

its emphasis upon the Spirit being given for the renewal of the entire church.”<sup>36</sup> Gifts of the Spirit are thus not “an end in themselves, but a means to renew the church.”<sup>37</sup>

It wasn't just the suitability of theology which made Vineyard such an influence on Anglican Charismatic theology and practice but also ‘institutional factors’: the broadness of the church; the ability to accommodate at parish level different emphases in theology and practice.<sup>38</sup> But, perhaps, more importantly, the Anglican liturgy contained a pre-existent framework by which the theology of inviting the Holy Spirit to move in the gathering could be understood – the ‘epiclesis’.<sup>39</sup> Stylistically, too, Wimber and the Vineyard's style of facilitating worship and ministry was far more acceptable and easier to adopt into Anglican styles than classical Pentecostal styles. Wimber wanted to lead meetings deliberately free from what he saw as the ‘hype’ of Pentecostal meetings. This value was expressed for example in the value of being ‘naturally supernatural’<sup>40</sup>.

In time, both St Andrews<sup>41</sup> and Holy Trinity Brompton became key centres for Charismatic renewal in the UK. Out of St Andrews both New Wine (“at the encouragement of Wimber” in 1989<sup>42</sup>), and its youthful cousin Soul Survivor were born from which two of the key worship songwriters and leaders in the UK emerged: Tim Hughes and Matt Redman. Moreover, the

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so close that renewal of the wider church was simply not on the agenda. See Peter Hocken, *Streams of Renewal*, Rev. ed. (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1997). p. 175.

<sup>36</sup> Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, p. 7. An example of this would be the handling of the gift of tongues, which Charismatics see as a gift for the renewal of the church, not so much for evangelism and mission as the early Pentecostals did.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 9. Brown agrees with this by stating that the gifts are seen as formational tools – used in growing disciples. Brown, p. 180.

<sup>38</sup> See J Williams, “Charismatic Renewal in Anglican Parishes,” *Renewal* 66, no. December 1976 - January 1977 (1976).

<sup>39</sup> For more on this see Hunt. p. 114 and David Pytches, *Come Holy Spirit* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984). p. 44.

<sup>40</sup> Don Williams, “Charismatic Worship”, in Paul Basden (ed.), *Exploring the Worship Spectrum* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004), p. 143.

<sup>41</sup> “For Pytches it was the turning point of his church which has grown into one of the leading centers of Renewal in Britain.” Hunt. p. 111.

<sup>42</sup> Elliott. p. 64



global worship training, song-writing and leadership movement, ‘Worship Central’, was born out of Holy Trinity Brompton under Tim Hughes’s leadership. Together, these four movements and their songs are pillars of not just Anglican Charismatic worship today, but they also influence the global P-C family.

Thus, we can begin to see the subtle distinctives due to history, sociology, and ecclesiology of the UK context of Charismatic worship in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century within the mainline Anglican church. As someone who grew up in the Church of England in the 90s, attended a Vineyard Church at the turn of the century and has been a ‘worship leader’ in the HTB and New Wine networks, I am very much an inhabitant of the history described above. Both the Anglican church I was in for 12 years as Worship Pastor and the current Anglican church I lead worship in and am ordained into have a shared praxis identifiable as ‘Charismatic worship’. So, what does it look like in praxis?

### **3. In praxis**

As we saw in the last chapter, P-C worship exists not primarily as a set of doctrines or written beliefs but first and foremost as a set of practices and phenomenologies. Its liturgy is oral and thus, whilst analysis of the texts of songs is important, it is only a small part of the picture. If Smith is right that, “Pentecostal spirituality and worship are very much a visual economy...”<sup>43</sup> and that practices go before belief for the movement<sup>44</sup>, it is crucial to outline the aesthetic form P-C worship takes, as it is in the form that the beliefs and underlying ‘theology’ of the movement – the intuitions latent in its spirituality - are expressed.

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<sup>43</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Thinking In Tongues*, p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 30-31.

Before we move to wider literature, by way of introduction I will describe the worship at St Luke's Gas Street, an Anglican church in the city centre of Birmingham, UK planted from Holy Trinity Brompton, London in late 2015, led by the Worship Leader and songwriter, Tim Hughes and his wife Rachel.

### ***3.1. St Luke's Gas Street, Birmingham, UK***

The service (or 'gathering' as it is called) begins with an informal welcome by the leader(s) of the meeting and an opening extemporaneous prayer. A time of 'worship' lasting around 30 minutes then commences consisting of a set of songs led by a 'worship leader(s)' and contemporary band on a stage. Not many of the songs will be older than a few years at most, if not a few months, several will have emerged from within the congregation itself and from previous spontaneous times of worship in the building. The tempo of songs will generally move from faster tempo to mid-tempo and slow – although there is no fixed pattern. The themes of songs will generally move from declaration, celebration and praise to personal, relational, intimate songs of response. This musical time will be interrupted by more extemporaneous prayer or exhortation by the worship leader or sometimes the overall leader of the meeting. Often the whole congregation will be encouraged and will respond by praying out loud all together, including in tongues. Sometimes this is spontaneous and not a response to a call to do so. Sometimes the whole congregation will sing in tongues whilst the band hold one chord underneath to offer musical support. Sometimes a prophetic word will be given in between two songs or at the end of the set – this could result in a physical response such as moving to the front space and receiving prayer ministry (laying on of hands and inviting more of the Spirit to come). In general, hands will be raised across the room during the time of worship, clapping

will occur, sometimes dancing, including from the musicians and worship leader(s) on stage. There will often be moments of uncertainty, what would be referred to as ‘waiting on the Lord’, to listen to the ‘voice of the Spirit’ as to ‘where He wants to take us’ next. Sometimes this can result in spontaneous songs emerging or simple repetition of one line of an existing song. Occasionally silence is also arrived at in these moments of ‘encounter’ with God.

After this time of worship, there will be prayers and intercessions for the world in some form – almost always extemporaneous and seen as part of the time of ‘sung worship’ (music will still be held underneath the prayer and the congregation will still be standing and be physically engaged (hands outstretched or hands out in the mode of reception) in prayer.

Following some notices and an offering (during which people are free to talk to one another), a 20-25 minute talk based on a passage of scripture will be delivered, after which a time of ‘ministry’ and worship will commence. This will be initiated by a call to respond by the preacher and/or accompanied by the main leader of the meeting. This will usually be a combination of natural applications from the talk but alongside prophetic senses (words, pictures, themes, even specific names of congregation members at times) from the leadership team. This period of response will include usually some form of musical background (although not always) and some silence (‘waiting on the Lord’) as the leaders (and the congregation) are encouraged to listen to the Spirit. People are invited to respond to any of the words given by moving out of their seats and coming to the front of the room where a ‘prayer ministry team’ will pray for them individually by the laying on of hands and invitation for ‘more of the Spirit’.

During this prayer time, more singing will be led by the band – it will generally be slower tempo personal songs of intimacy – but can also (and often) end up more celebratory and with

praise before the service is closed. During the time of prayer ministry and subsequent worship there will be varied physical response across the room, as earlier. Physical response can include kneeling down, dancing or lying out on the floor (prostrate) or occasionally seemingly falling to the floor ‘under the power of the Spirit’. A call for salvation will almost always be given at some point during this end prayer ministry and worship time. Finally, the meeting will end with an informal prayer or blessing from the gathering leader, or sometimes the worship leader themselves. Often worship will continue beyond the ‘official’ end time of the meeting (usually 90 minutes after the start) with more songs, often in the praise and thanksgiving mode, but sometimes staying in a slower tempo intimacy mode.

Although there will be variations, not least at key seasons in the (Anglican) Church Calendar, this description would be correct of almost any service (10.30am, 4.00pm, 6.30pm) a visitor attended at St Luke’s Gas Street. Sacraments such as baptism and communion are ‘fitted in’ to this pattern, with communion occurring once a month in each service (and every Sunday at the parish church St Luke’s Great Colmore Street), and multiple baptisms at least twice a year.

This is one current specific example of praxis, but what do we learn from the wider literature on P-C praxis<sup>45</sup>?

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<sup>45</sup> Especially focusing on the worship within the UK Church Of England context.

### 3.2. Summary through literature from wider contexts

Back in 1981 the General Synod of the Church of England<sup>46</sup> identified 5 characteristics of Anglican Charismatic worship in addition to the core 3 definers of ‘Charismatic’ spirituality (healing, tongues and prophecy)<sup>47</sup>. These 5 were:

- physical worship (use of the body in worship)
- new styles of music and creativity
- more freedom for individuals to contribute
- the emergence of non-Sunday meetings
- and an unformed, early ‘sacramentality’ around music<sup>48</sup>

This early descriptive work in the UK was supplemented by more much needed specific work in the 90’s by James Steven, and by Elliott at the turn of the century.<sup>49</sup> These UK studies have subsequently been supplemented in the early decades of this century by further ethnographic<sup>50</sup> and sociological appraisals principally from the North American context.<sup>51</sup> Although actual Sunday by Sunday practice will vary, it is possible to formalise a description of the aesthetic elements based on a general consensus of the literature<sup>52</sup>. Brown notes that there are “enough

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<sup>46</sup> *The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England*, General Synod of the Church of England (CIO, London 1981).

<sup>47</sup> 1 Cor. 12.8-10 and 1 Cor. 14 being the scriptural background for the gifts of the Spirit associated with the movement.

<sup>48</sup> James Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Elliott has a comprehensive description of Charismatic worship. See Chapter 5 especially for descriptions of space and timing, leadership, typical service structure, singing, body movement, and the flow of the ‘worship time’ itself. p. 163f.

<sup>50</sup> Defined as, “a method characterised by extended periods of observation, participation, and dialogue within a particular congregation or gathering.” Ingalls and Yong, *The Spirit of Praise*, p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> “Research is relatively unevenly geographically distributed, and large volumes of faith-centred work emerging in the USA, for example, could be helpfully balanced by a greater number of contributions from elsewhere.” Porter, p. 166. For a recent summary see Ingalls and Yong, p. 6. Cf. Ruth and Lim, *Lovin’ On Jesus*; Les Moir, *Missing Jewel* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> James Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, p. 92.

assumptions, goals and distinctive practices to be near universally recognisable”.<sup>53</sup> Where available I will prefer UK sources relevant to the Anglican context.<sup>54</sup>

*a) The priority of corporate singing: ‘the time of worship’*

One of the primary descriptive distinctives of P-C worship is the time spent in corporate song.<sup>55</sup>

This isn’t merely an emphasis of P-C worship but a priority as it inevitably displaces other more liturgical elements of the service. Indeed, the time of singing has become known as the ‘block’, ‘set’ or simply ‘time’ of worship by those within the movement,<sup>56</sup> and consists of multiple songs joined together musically or thematically to create a ‘flow’.<sup>57</sup> Within this flow of “sustained, unbroken, flowing praise”<sup>58</sup> whole songs may be repeated or sections of songs<sup>59</sup>. The whole block lasts anywhere between 15 minutes to an hour but 20-40 minutes is typical.<sup>60</sup>

*b) Instrumentation and leadership*

The sung worship is led by a ‘worship leader’<sup>61</sup> who is typically lay (non-ordained), sings and often plays either guitar or keyboards.<sup>62</sup> They are typically accompanied by a contemporary

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<sup>53</sup> Alistair Brown, "Charismatically-Orientated Worship" in D. A. Carson (ed.), *Worship: Adoration and Action*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Paternoster Press, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> Such as Brown, Bebbington, Scotland, Steven, and Ward.

<sup>55</sup> For more discussion of this see for example, Warrington. pp. 223-226.

<sup>56</sup> Worship as a noun refers to “the first main part of the church service”, including congregational singing, music, movement prayer, prophecy, glossolalia. Albrecht, *Rites In The Spirit*, p. 155. See also, Ruth and Lim, p. 12. This is in obvious tension with the Anglican understanding of the whole of the service being the ‘time’ of worship and, as Ward notes, the traditional ‘hymn sandwich’ approach to the insertion of sung worship into BCP or Common Worship liturgy. Ward. p. 198.

<sup>57</sup> See for example, Elliott, p. 192: “The flow of the worship time is maintained by the use of sound.” Steven observes for example 6 songs in his case study at ‘St.C’s’ pp. 117-118; Cf. Scotland. p. 59.

<sup>58</sup> A continuous ‘set’ led by band – see Barry Wayne Liesch, *The New Worship : Straight Talk on Music and the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2001). p. 54.

<sup>59</sup> Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, pp. 92-96, 114 Cf. Scotland. p. 59.

<sup>60</sup> Ward. p. 199. Ward notes it as between 30-40 minutes in length generally, Scotland, between 15 minutes and 1 hour. Scotland, p. 59. Ingalls between 20-40 minutes, Ingalls and Yong, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, p. 92. In the Pentecostal tradition (and increasingly the Charismatic Anglican) more often plural.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 100. Cf. Scotland. p. 59. This explosion of P-C worship has made “musicians the main worship leaders, not pastors.” Ruth and Lim. p. 18.

band at the core being bass, drums, electric guitar and other singers.<sup>63</sup> This ‘worship team’ not only provides the accompaniment for the congregational singing, but also rehearses and prepares the set of songs which flow together to form the time of worship. They create and curate a unified musical experience for the congregation. This may well include planned or spontaneous musical interludes or ‘space’ within the set. In contrast to the placement of a traditional organist, the band is positioned at the front of the gathering, on a stage if there is one, in a visible place of leadership.<sup>64</sup>

There are many elements to the worship leader’s role, including: preparing in advance the worship set of songs; leading rehearsals with the band and musically directing the band during the time of worship; leading the congregation in singing; encouraging engagement and participation by the congregation; deciding when to be ‘spontaneous’, and responding to what the perceived activity of the Spirit is in the time of worship. As Steven observes: “leaders [encourage] participants to allow God ‘to do whatever he wants to do’”.<sup>65</sup>

### *c) Songs*

The actual songs used in Charismatic worship are songs sung *to* God more than *about* God.<sup>66</sup> In the early Vineyard years they were very simple in musical structure and lyric;<sup>67</sup> however, that has changed in recent decades as more creativity has been explored. The songs have a

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<sup>63</sup> See Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, pp. 96-97 for example; Cf. Ch.10 of John Leach, *Liturgy and Liberty: Combining the Best of the Old with the Best of the New in Worship* (Eastbourne: MARC, 1989). There can be more folk adaptations of this grouping – for example using violins, clarinets and other orchestral instruments.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 101. There are exceptions to this, for example, being placed on one side at the front as Steven notes p. 98.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 182.

<sup>66</sup> For more on the distinct music and lyrical content see Ward, pp. 121-162. This feature of singing ‘to’ God not just about Him is a shared feature of the wider Pentecostal streams. See for example, a former drug addict’s description of worship in Hong Kong: “In worship you don’t simply sing about God and Jesus, you ‘touch’ God” Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism : The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). P. 89.

<sup>67</sup> Scotland, p. 58.

rapid turnover<sup>68</sup> most only lasting a year or less, however, there are a core of ‘successful’ songs that can last decades. Songwriting and using ‘new’ songs is a key feature of the movement with creativity being a key value, as Lim and Ruth note from a North American perspective: “‘Sing to the Lord a new song’ (Psalm 96.1) became a common motto for the entire phenomenon.”<sup>69</sup> This isn’t merely a cultural phenomenon of delivering worship in a ‘culturally relevant’ form but a theological commitment to the ‘new’ creative work of the Spirit in the midst of the congregation at worship – God in the *present*.

As we saw at St Luke’s Gas Street, so Elliot observes more widely: “Not all Charismatic songs are formal ones, some are known as spontaneous or prophetic songs.”<sup>70</sup> These small stanzas or choruses are created ‘in the moment’, usually in the musical interlude between songs within the block.

*d) Congregational participation; physical and emotional freedom*

A ‘liturgical democratizing’<sup>71</sup> has occurred with the explosion of P-C worship. Not only having an impact on who can lead it but also how it is participated in.

Expressing thanksgiving to God is one of the key characteristics of Charismatic worship. Freedom of individual and collective expression in the meeting is of high value with worshippers encouraged to express this love to God physically and emotionally.<sup>72</sup> Participation involves not just intellectual ascent, but physical and emotional engagement – it is not merely

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<sup>68</sup> Alistair Brown, "Charismatically-Orientated Worship," in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. D. A. Carson (2002). p.183

<sup>69</sup> Ruth and Lim, p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> Elliot, p. 198.

<sup>71</sup> Ruth and Lim, p. 18.

<sup>72</sup> See for example, Scotland, p. 59; Cf. Steven, pp. 113-115.



‘academic’ as one commentator notes<sup>73</sup>. This type of response is taken for granted as biblical<sup>74</sup> and preferable.<sup>75</sup> This physical engagement can involve clapping, kneeling, dancing, shouting, raising hands, closing eyes or even lying facedown.<sup>76</sup> This “expressive revolution”<sup>77</sup> is not seen merely as human activity but as a sign of the worshippers truly encountering the life of God in worship.<sup>78</sup>

e) *Congregational participation: gifts of the spirit, testimony and prayer.*

As we have already mentioned, gifts of the Spirit are expected to be manifested in public gatherings of worship especially tongues and prophecy.<sup>79</sup> New Testament scholar James Dunn, argues that this emphasis on the giftedness of the congregation is a key doctrine of P-C theology.<sup>80</sup> David Lim argues that Charismatic emphasis on congregational participation is a fulfilment of the Reformational intention to have a priesthood of all believers.<sup>81</sup> One of the main, if not defining features of P-C worship is the phenomenon of ‘singing in tongues’ creating a “cathedral of sound”.<sup>82</sup> This is a corporate moment, usually within the block of worship in between songs, where the congregation is encouraged to respond by lifting their voice using the gift of tongues.

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<sup>73</sup> Koenig, p. 147.

<sup>74</sup> Wimber outlined how worship should occur by using Biblical principles including three in particular: confession, thanksgiving and adoration. For Wimber, it was key that these elements were not only expressed intellectually but bodily as “seen through the Bible”. John Wimber and Carol Wimber, “Worship: Intimacy with God,” *Renewal Journal* 6, no. Worship (1995, 2011). p. 12.

<sup>75</sup> Brown, p. 182. Indeed, this was one of the key reasons for the move to the projection of lyrics away from traditional hymn books or sheets – so as to free the worshipper physically.

<sup>76</sup> Praise is expressed through singing and, “hand raising, expressive prayer postures, ecstatic utterances such as tongues speech and prophecy.” Ingalls and Yong, p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989). p. 241.

<sup>78</sup> Steven, p. 115.

<sup>79</sup> Scotland, p. 59.

<sup>80</sup> See James D. G. Dunn, “Ministry and the Ministry: The Charismatic Renewals Challenge to Traditional Ecclesiology,” in Cecil M. Roebeck (ed.) *Charismatic Experiences in History*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985).

<sup>81</sup> David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1991). pp. 34-38. In Macchia’s view, this “was never adequately brought to bear on the local church worship service.” Macchia, *Signs of Grace*, p. 157.

<sup>82</sup> Daniel W. Hardy and David Ford, *Jubilate : Theology in Praise* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984). p. 19.

Other ways the congregation may be involved is through giving testimony, thanksgiving prayers (collectively all at once or individually spoken out), and intercessions. Macchia argues this is part of a wider preference for narrative and story over “abstract or rational systems of doctrine”.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, linked to the belief in the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit, most Charismatic services will end with a time of ‘prayer ministry’ as part of the worship where members are invited to come forward to receive a fresh infilling of the Spirit or laying on of hands and prayer for a particular need related to the sermon or a prophetic word that has been given.

#### *f) Interruptions and unpredictability*

By encouraging high levels of congregation participation, and inviting and expecting the Holy Spirit’s dynamic presence (He is viewed as the “worship director”<sup>84</sup>), P-C worship can often be unpredictable.<sup>85</sup> With such high levels of potential congregational participation, worship may well be interrupted by the exercising of spiritual gifts, such as giving a prophetic word.<sup>86</sup> Charismatics will often hold in tension scriptures such as John 3, where Jesus describes the Spirit as like the wind, blowing wherever he chooses, with Paul’s command for order in public worship (1 Cor 14.33).<sup>87</sup> As Warrington notes: “[practitioners] would rather run the risk of making mistakes in worship in their exuberance than restrict the Spirit from doing that which

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<sup>83</sup> Frank D. Macchia, "Signs of Grace: Towards a Charismatic Theology of Worship," in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016). p.157. Cf. Brown, *Charismatically-Orientated Worship*, pp. 184-185. A useful discussion around the emphasis on congregational participation can be followed in Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism : Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), pp. 17-18.

<sup>84</sup> Warrington, p. 223.

<sup>85</sup> Brown, “Charismatically-Orientated Worship”, p. 184.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* p. 184.

<sup>87</sup> With the increase in the ‘excellence’ value over the last decade there has been a tension between ‘planned’ spontaneity and ‘in the moment’ spontaneity. Lim and Ruth note this tension (pp. 36-39) – for example, they cite a 1982 Vineyard service where an unplanned worship set lasted almost 50 minutes with 16 songs selected ‘in the moment’ by the worship leader, Carl Tuttle (p.37).

he wants on account of a desire for propriety.”<sup>88</sup> Experiences in worship may thus “transcend the limits of rationality”.<sup>89</sup>

### ***3.3. ‘Invisible’ aspects: expectations and beliefs***

It is crucial to remember when describing and defining P-C worship that some distinctives are visible and observable, whilst others are invisible yet just as real.<sup>90</sup> These are, what Alistair Brown identifies as, “key ideas in the minds of Charismatic worshippers, [which] determine what they do and how they do it”.<sup>91</sup> This is the ‘philosophy’ of P-C worship<sup>92</sup> or what Elliott expresses as the “internal basics of the Charismatic framework of understanding which guide behaviour, belief and language”.<sup>93</sup> She rightly warns of the danger of stopping analysis at the surface level of forms rather than going deeper. The aesthetic forms act as clues to deeper beliefs and expectations of what worship means to the P-C believer and what its goal is. Although there is variety in commentators’ analysis of what these deeper beliefs of P-C worship are (which I will briefly outline below), we shall see that a core theme emerges.<sup>94</sup>

Firstly, Brown views two clear distinctives emerging in P-C worship: the variety of praxis and the desire to move away from any set form<sup>95</sup>. Baptist, Ian Stackhouse, meanwhile identifies two central themes: intimacy and revival.<sup>96</sup> He observes an emphasis on a desire for the real

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<sup>88</sup> Warrington, p. 223.

<sup>89</sup> Macchia, *Signs of Grace*, p. 157,

<sup>90</sup> Brown, p. 180.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p. 178.

<sup>92</sup> Ingalls and Yong, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> Elliott, p. 114.

<sup>94</sup> Again, I will preference UK sources for this analysis.

<sup>95</sup> Brown notes in Charismatic worship an inherent drive to move away from fixed liturgy such as offered by the traditional church, something which can be considered to be “mindless repetition and unacceptable to God” (p. 179.)

<sup>96</sup> Stackhouse, p. 49.

impact of God's kingdom on the church and the world.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile Macchia sees “orality, narrativity, visions, dreams, healing and bodily movement” as some of the distinctive features of a “Charismatically diverse worship service”. For Macchia there is a “greater variety of gifted expressions” (than ‘traditional forms of worship’) that make Charismatic worship “holistic”.<sup>98</sup>

Meanwhile, musician and theologian Jeremy Begbie offers a useful fourfold identification of key themes:

1. The agency of God himself in worship and associated expectation of a profoundly personal relational encounter;
2. Prioritising praise as a theme – especially when society does not;
3. The mimicking of culture in order to make worship accessible to those outside the church;
4. The simplicity in music which grants flexibility in instrumentation and leadership, as well as multi-generational participation.<sup>99</sup>

In agreement with Begbie's primary theme, Elliott proposes the existence of a single unifying motif that lies beneath the practices of P-C worship: “the relationship between God and

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

<sup>98</sup> Macchia, *Signs of Grace*, p. 158.

<sup>99</sup> Begbie, *The Spirituality of Renewal Music*, pp. 232-233.

humanity.”<sup>100</sup> P-C worship is at root centred around “communication between God and humanity”.<sup>101</sup>

As we shall see in the latter half of this chapter and in the next, this theme of close divine-human relationship, of the possibility of encounter with God through singing, is the central distinguishing motif and is increasingly recognised as the foundational core of the ‘invisible’ beliefs and expectations of P-C worship.<sup>102</sup> It is the same ‘inchoate’ sacramentality that Bishop Colin Buchanan recognised in the UK in the early years of 1982, or, in North America, the ‘Pentecostalisation’ of evangelicalism of Slade<sup>103</sup>, or the ‘Pentecostalisation’ of contemporary worship of Lim and Ruth. However named, this recognition of sung worship mediating the presence of God in a particular way for the worshippers, is the central unique feature of P-C worship. The result is that “for Pentecostals, ‘worship’ is another way of saying ‘presence of God.’”<sup>104</sup>

This notion is expressed most commonly by the terms ‘encounter’ and ‘intimacy’<sup>105</sup>. We will look in more detail at these terms later but first there is more to do in the task of precisely defining P-C worship. There has been a confusion around terminology used to discuss the phenomenon. If paid attention to, this very confusion reveals yet more about the defining core of the P-C worship distinctive.

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<sup>100</sup> Elliot, p. 114, 133.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 202.

<sup>102</sup> Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, p. 3. Cf. Cartledge, *Encountering The Spirit*, pp. 25, 37.

<sup>103</sup> Peter Slade, "Why Should the Charismatics Have All the Good Music?" (Paper presented at the American Academy of Religion, Nov 20, 2011).

<sup>104</sup> Daniel E. Albrecht, "Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking through the Lens of Ritual," *Pneuma* 14, no. 2 (1996). p. 9.

<sup>105</sup> See for example: John Wimber, "Worship: Intimacy with God," *Worship Update* January (1996).

#### 4. In ‘contemporary’ context: terminology and a deeper theology

Searching for the most accurate language to use whilst being aware of the subtle theology each adjective can covertly contain, is a challenge to the theologian of P-C worship.

Historian of Worship, Lester Ruth identifies the “dizzying array of terms and classifications for worship in North America”<sup>106</sup>. He bemoans the fluidity of such terms as “praise and worship”, “blended worship”, “creative worship”, “contemporary worship”, and the difficulty of identifying any significant coherent, consistent meaning to them.<sup>107</sup> Such limitations in terminology lead Ruth to propose a new “liturgical taxonomy” at the centre of which is the question of “how and where they [the congregation] expect to have encounter in worship.”<sup>108</sup> Expectation of encounter and the *location* of this encounter are crucial to categorizing worship forms that can ostensibly seem similar.

A study by Peter Slade seems to support this view. He investigates in the American context some of the ‘Pentecostalization of evangelicalism’ mentioned earlier, tracing how Evangelical mainstream churches have adopted the forms of P-C<sup>109</sup> worship without necessarily the theology<sup>110</sup>. This “transplantation of contemporary Christian worship from its Charismatic

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<sup>106</sup> Lester Ruth, “A Rose by Any Other Name: Attempts at Classifying North American Protestant Worship,” in Todd Johnson (ed.) *The Conviction of Things Not Seen: Worship and Ministry in the Twenty-First Century*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002), p. 2. In the final months of this thesis Ruth released a new book co-authored with Swee Hong Lee with a similar but more updated chapter on this theme: see Chapter 1: What is ‘Contemporary Worship’? Ruth and Lim, pp. 1-23.

<sup>107</sup> Ruth, *A Rose by Any Other Name*, p. 4.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>109</sup> Which Slade particularly identifies as sourced in Calvary Chapel/Vineyard tradition.

<sup>110</sup> Slade, *Why Should the Charismatics Have All The Good Music?* Although some would argue that both contemporary or ‘seeker-sensitive’ services and Charismatic services have a shared origin – the American frontier or revival tradition. See Dale Cockrell, “Nineteenth-Century Popular Music,” in David Nicholls (ed.), *The Cambridge History of American Music* (Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Cf. James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000). p. 164.

home”<sup>111</sup> has had unintended consequences. Slade’s thesis is that Evangelical churches adopted the form for the perceived effect it would have on church growth:

In moving music designed for Pentecostal/Charismatic worship into Evangelical churches - that neither expect, believe in, nor want Charismatic displays during Sunday worship - the *telos* of the music changes.<sup>112</sup>

Whilst not agreeing with all of Slade’s conclusions, his study further suggests a distinction is needed between ‘Pentecostal-Charismatic’ and ‘contemporary’ worship. According to Slade, contemporary worship often has the musical, production and architectural form of P-C worship but without the longed for, expected and allowed ministry of the Spirit in the congregational setting (i.e., prophecy, tongues, healing ministry)<sup>113</sup>.

For Slade, the *telos* of contemporary worship is the kind of emotional reaction akin to a secular rock concert. In addition to this he misses the alternative *telos* of making new visitors comfortable due to the culturally relevant form of P-C worship (for example, Willow Creek and the ‘seeker-sensitive’ models of worship). The point is that these are *different* goals to the P-C aim of encounter with God, intimacy and an expectation of the movement of the Spirit in the public meeting.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Slade, p. 4.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> Slade uses Wimber’s terminology of ‘signs and wonders’. It is important to note that part of why ‘contemporary worship’ arose as such a strong term in the North American context is due to sharp lines being drawn with ‘traditional’ forms of worship. Such a binary contrast (see Ruth and Lim, p. 11) never truly occurred in the UK due to the relatively successful integration of such ‘contemporary’ worship into the mainline Anglican churches through the Vineyard and Wimber (building on the work of others such as Mima Fara and the ‘Fisher Folk’ who came to England in the early 1970’s and embedded themselves within the Anglican church).

<sup>114</sup> Interestingly this was a key debate for Calvary Chapel and John Wimber (Wimber arguing for ministry of the Spirit in the main church gatherings) and is noted as one of the key reasons Wimber left Calvary Chapel to join the fledgling Vineyard Church. (For the story of the Vineyard see: Bill Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle: A History of the Vineyard* (Cape Town: Vineyard International Press, 1999).

Understanding the intended *telos* (goal) of worship is thus essential for uncovering an underlying theology and forming clear terminology.

A similar distinction, and perhaps the best discussion juxtaposing contemporary and Charismatic worship, occurs within the collection of essays, “Exploring the Worship Spectrum”.<sup>115</sup> In this collection, Don Williams (Vineyard USA) and Joe Horness (Willow Creek) each contribute chapters on their respective traditions (‘Charismatic’ and ‘contemporary’). Horness suggests, like Slade, that the difference lies in the evidence of the Spirit’s activity within the gathered worship. He argues that both share a belief in the Spirit’s agency during gathered worship, but differ in the visibility of this work:

While both movements seek to encourage the activity of the Holy Spirit in our worship, the emphasis of the contemporary worship service would be primarily focused on the internal moving of the Spirit in the hearts of our people while the Charismatic worship movement would embrace and encourage more outward signs of the Holy Spirit’s presence as well.<sup>116</sup>

Similar to Slade’s earlier analysis, Horness goes on to suggest that these outward signs that would be absent from a contemporary worship service would include: “speaking in tongues, singing in the Spirit, healings, ...prophetic words.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Basden, *Exploring The Worship Spectrum*.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. 161.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.



Williams, however, is stronger in his articulation of this difference, claiming that: “contemporary worship is a way station on the road to experiencing the fullness of the Spirit and the release of his gifts for the whole congregation.”<sup>118</sup> For Williams, reflecting the Vineyard and Wimber distinctive, there is a connected point about the ‘priesthood of all believers’ as there is a belief that “all worshippers come with gifts to be given, not just the up-front leadership.”<sup>119</sup> As the famous Vineyard slogan says, ‘everyone gets to play’<sup>120</sup>.

Hence Williams’ definition of Charismatic worship is: “worship where the leadership and gifts of the Spirit (charismata) are evidenced or welcomed in personal and corporate praise”<sup>121</sup>. Charismatic worship is a deliberate focus on recovering elements of worship from 1 Corinthians 12-14.<sup>122</sup>

Steven Holmes is one of the few scholars in the UK to recognise this problem in terminology and address it (albeit in a footnote).<sup>123</sup> Confirming the distinction suggested based on our reading of Slade and Williams, Holmes concludes that ‘contemporary’ is the best option for his study, as he wants to preserve the term ‘Charismatic’ for those congregations “which practice contemporary worship with a clear expectation of spontaneous, and perhaps supernatural, interventions.”<sup>124</sup> For Holmes, as for Slade and Williams, ‘Charismatic worship’ is similar to contemporary in style but is crucially different in its very expectations – its

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p. 127.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> John Wimber, *Everyone Gets To Play: John Wimber’s writings and teachings on life together in Christ*, (Boise, ID, Ampelon Publishing, 2008).

<sup>121</sup> Don Williams, “Charismatic Worship”, p. 139.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. p. 141.

<sup>123</sup> Holmes. p. 193, fn. 1

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

theology, vision, and values – which then manifest in observable features in times of worship.<sup>125</sup>

Lim and Ruth propose these features as a distinct Pentecostal contribution to the contemporary form of worship – introducing a ‘sacramentality’ (which we will return to in Chapter 5): “Pentecostalism contributed contemporary worship’s sacramentality, that is, both the expectation that God’s presence could be encountered in worship and the normal means by which this encounter would happen.”<sup>126</sup> We will look in the next chapter more at this key role the Pentecostal background provides in forming a theology of praxis.

## **5. Conclusion: Pentecostal-Charismatic contemporary worship - singing to encounter**

By describing the praxis of Charismatic worship in the UK and by situating it within its historical and contemporary context, we have sought greater clarity as to the nature and definition of the phenomenon of P-C worship. We are now in a position to draw conclusions regarding both terminology and philosophy.

### ***5.1. Terminology: P-C worship***

Firstly, in regard to terminology. Charismatic Worship *is* pentecostal (low ‘p’). What do we mean by this?

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<sup>125</sup> He also rejects ‘praise and worship’ as used by, for example, Koenig, as he wants to talk of the “entire liturgical event”. p. 193, fn. 1.

<sup>126</sup> Ruth and Lim, p. 18. They point out that this is often referenced by practitioners as an application of Psalm 22.3.

The challenges of forming a definitive description for Pentecostalism are well chartered.<sup>127</sup> Anderson gives an overview of approaches (typological, social-scientific, and historical)<sup>128</sup> before arguing for utilizing a ‘family resemblance’ analogy incorporating as broad a taxonomy as possible.<sup>129</sup> Similarly, Bergunder using a cultural studies perspective, argues that the network of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches should be understood as a “contingent discursive network”<sup>130</sup>, whose worshippers share “particular identifying doctrines and practices [which are constantly] subject to transformation”.<sup>131</sup> It is safe to say that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century ‘Pentecostalism’ has moved to become a category with blurred boundaries that includes Classical denominational ‘Pentecostals’, 20<sup>th</sup> Century independent churches, mainline churches as we have seen in the UK including Catholic and Anglican Charismatics, right through to ‘neo-Pentecostal and neo-Charismatic churches of this century’.<sup>132</sup>

If this is the family – is there a shared central distinctive? Whilst Anderson is nervous of placing a “particular theology” as the foundations for the family house<sup>133</sup> others are less reticent - whilst nevertheless holding in tension the diversity of global expressions (of which Anglican

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<sup>127</sup> “In seeking a working definition of *Pentecostalism* we need to acknowledge that such a definition might prove elusive and always depends on the paradigms and criteria of the individual attempting to make it.” Allan Anderson, *Studying Global Pentecostalism : Theories and Methods*, The Anthropology of Christianity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). p. 27.

<sup>128</sup> Of particular influence has been his advocacy of a “polycentric approach to the question of Pentecostal origins” Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. p. 27; cf. p. 15: “Despite the seeming diversity within global Pentecostalism, the movement does have family resemblances, certain universal features and beliefs throughout its many manifestations.” This model has become the ‘gold standard’ [see ‘The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements’, in S. M. Burgess and G. McGee (eds.) *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1988), pp.1 - 6.]

<sup>130</sup> Michael Bergunder, “The Cultural Turn”, in Allan Anderson (ed.) *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 51-73 (54).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 55. Both these models provide a more sophisticated and global approach than the better known populist “waves” analysis (attributed to Peter Wagner) which distinguishes ‘first wave’ capital ‘P’ Pentecostalism from ‘second wave’ low ‘p’ pentecostalism and the infiltration of the mainline church in the 1960’s-70s Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism : Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). p. 158. The emergence of independent ‘Charismatic’ churches (particularly, for example, Vineyard) in the 1980’s-90’s is seen as the ‘Third Wave’. For more see pp. 477 – 519 of Peter Hocken, “The Charismatic Movement,” in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. S.M.Burgess and G.McGee (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1988). Cf. Michael Pollock Hamilton, *The Charismatic Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). Also see Smith, *Thinking In Tongues*, pp. xvi, xvii.

<sup>132</sup> Anderson, pp. 16-20.

<sup>133</sup> Anderson, p. 27.

Charismatic is a part). Jacobsen writes: “In a general sense, being Pentecostal means that one is committed to a Spirit-centred, miracle-affirming, praise-orientated version of the Christian faith.”<sup>134</sup> Riches similarly, suggests “the immanent presence of the Spirit and supernatural empowerment” are key.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, Warrington writes of a “personal, experiential encounter of the Spirit of God” as being fundamental.<sup>136</sup>

This general emphasis on what James K. A. Smith calls the “Spirit’s surprise”<sup>137</sup> expressed as the belief in the continued use of the gifts of the Spirit, seems a uniting tenant of the ‘pentecostal family’. So Douglas Jacobsen<sup>138</sup> advocates the use of ‘small-p pentecostalism as a way of recognising a diversity unified by this one shared core similarity.

Here Smith is very helpful in attempting to formulate a five-fold shared pentecostal world view<sup>139</sup>:

- i. “Radical openness to God” – a belief and expectation in the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the church and world (including gifts of the Spirit). This includes spontaneity, ‘newness’ and the surprise of the unexpected. In turn this leads to a

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<sup>134</sup> Douglas G. Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit : Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003). pp. 11-12.

<sup>135</sup> Tanya Riches, “Dreaming Urban Indigenous Australian Christian Worship in the Great Southland of the Holy Spirit” in Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong (eds.) *The Spirit Of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), pp. 60-77 (61). This shared ‘spirit-centric’ orientation in theology is matched by some shared observable facets in collective identity such as an “appeal to experience, narrative testimony, and a culture of change.” Shane Clifton, “An Analysis of the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia” Ph.D. diss., Australian Catholic University, Strathfield, 2005, p. 110. Cited in Ingalls and Yong, *The Spirit of Praise*, p. 61.

<sup>136</sup> Warrington, p. 20.

<sup>137</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, p. xvi.

<sup>138</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, 2003, pp. 8-12.

<sup>139</sup> Although note there are other such attempts to summarise the ‘marks’ of Pentecostalism. Dayton, for example, suggests: regeneration, sanctification, Spirit-baptism, healing, and eschatological expectation. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, in Macchia, p. 208. I have selected to use Smith’s as they are broader in scope, less tied to capital ‘P’ Pentecostal doctrine *per se*, and therefore more suitable for our broader discussion of pentecostal-Charismatic shared emphases.

‘dynamic ecclesiology’ and a spirituality shaped “by a fundamental mode of *reception*”.<sup>140</sup>

- ii. An “enchanted”<sup>141</sup> theology of Creation and culture – matter as ‘charged’ with the presence of the Spirit and the world as a theatre of battle between the people of the Spirit and demons and ‘powers and principalities’: “Pentecostal spirituality is marked by a deep sense of the Spirit’s immanence...an expectation that the Spirit operates *within* the created order.”<sup>142</sup>
- iii. A “nondualistic affirmation of embodiment and materiality” – as expressed for example in an emphasis on healing ministries;
- iv. An emphasis on the role of experience “as opposed to rationalistic Evangelical theology” – our relationship to God is not merely intellectual but bodily and emotive<sup>143</sup>. Interestingly he thus describes Pentecostal worship as “a kind of performative postmodernism, an enacted refusal of rationalism”<sup>144</sup>. For Smith, Pentecostal worship is also ““experiential” because it assumes a holistic understanding of personhood and agency – that the essence of the human animal can’t be reduced to reason or the intellect.”<sup>145</sup>
- v. An “eschatological orientation to mission and justice”.<sup>146</sup>

By combining Anderson’s family resemblance approach with the specific anchoring of Jacobsen and Smith’s shared core values, it is clear that ‘pentecostal’ with a low ‘p’ is a very

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<sup>140</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, p. 39.

<sup>141</sup> For more discussion on attempts to re-enchant the world see James K. A. Smith, “Secularity, Globalization, and the Re-enchantment of the World”, in James K. A. Smith (ed.) *After Modernity? Secularity, Globalization, and the Re-enchantment of the World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), pp. 3-13.

<sup>142</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, p. 40; cf. p. 86f.

<sup>143</sup> See *ibid.* p. 43, pp.48-85; cf. Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality : A Passion for the Kingdom*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993). pp. 125-81.

<sup>144</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, p. 59.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.* p. 72.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 12, 33-47.

useful ‘gathering term’ “indicating a shared set of practices and theological intuitions that are shared by Pentecostal/Charismatics, and ‘third wavers’”.<sup>147</sup> At root, this low ‘p’ pentecostalism is “an understanding of the Christian faith that is radically open to the continued operation of the Spirit”.<sup>148</sup> It is an experience-orientated theology of encounter<sup>149</sup> - an understanding of God as the “One who is there-now”.<sup>150</sup>

Thus in regard to terminology for this project, because my own context is one where the term ‘Charismatic’ would be used by practitioners and commentators<sup>151</sup> and moreover where, to describe the form of worship experienced within the Anglican tradition as ‘pentecostal’ would be a very misleading terminology, I will employ the term ‘pentecostal-Charismatic’ (‘P-C’) throughout this work. This has the benefit of rightfully situating UK ‘Charismatic worship’ in the global pentecostal frame of shared family resemblance described above, whilst also acknowledging the particular context and history of the development of ‘Charismatic worship’ within the Anglican tradition.<sup>152</sup>

Finally, it is important to note when using this broad, flexible categorization (‘pentecostal-Charismatic’ or ‘P-C’) it may often need nuancing by the particularity of context. There can be some subtle differences between pentecostal-Charismatic family members easily overlooked but important to note.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid. p. xvii.

<sup>148</sup> For more see Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, p. xvii.

<sup>149</sup> “Pentecostal theology may be best identified as a theology of encounter”, Warrington, p. 21.

<sup>150</sup> McClung, p. 48.

<sup>151</sup> For example, James Steven’s seminal work, *Worship In The Spirit*. Indeed, it is important to note other scholars, and in particular, those from a UK perspective argue for the use of the term ‘Charismatic’ in a similar manner to Jacobsen and Smith’s ‘pentecostal’ (*Encountering the Spirit*, p. 18).

<sup>152</sup> In a recent collection of essays on pentecostal-Charismatic global praise, Monique Ingalls reaches a similar conclusion: “‘pentecostal-Charismatic’ is used to invoke the constellation of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Christian renewal movements that are related to one another as part of a trans-national social network connected by shared beliefs and practices – of which music is, of course, key.” Ingalls and Yong, p. 3

<sup>153</sup> For example, Michael Webb uses ‘P-C’ but the praxis he describes includes spontaneous verbal affirmations of the preaching from with the congregation. This is a ritual feature which would traditionally occur in classic

Secondly, P-C worship must not be confused with the broader category of ‘contemporary’. It is clear that a worship practice can be described as ‘contemporary’ without necessarily being ‘Charismatic’. Contemporary is a reference principally to *style* and tends to be relate to a more ‘seeker-sensitive’ philosophy whereas ‘Charismatic’ is a reference principally to *theology* or at least expectations which overlap with but are not contained by the *style* of contemporary worship.

Perhaps the clearest most accurate terminology would thus be to add ‘contemporary’ to the ‘P-C’ moniker. Or in the UK to simply talk of ‘*Charismatic Contemporary Worship*’ (CCW) in order to acknowledge the above nuances and carefully describe contemporary worship which has the *added* feature or emphasis on the ministry of the Spirit amongst the congregation as they encounter God in the singing. However, for ease of use, and having articulated the distinction I will continue to use the shorter and more universally recognised ‘P-C worship’ but with awareness of this frame.

## ***5.2. Singing to encounter***

We have framed the discussion of definition in firstly a historical frame before moving onto outline the praxis before finally contrasting it with that of ‘contemporary’ worship. This has not only acted as a method to define our terms for the project but also as a means by which the central core motif of P-C worship is revealed.

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‘Pentecostalism’ but usually not in a ‘Charismatic’ Anglican church in the UK. See Michael Webb, “Every Creative Aspect Breaking Out! Pentecostal-Charismatic Worship, Oro Gospel Music and a Millennialist Aesthetic in Papua Guinea” in Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong (eds.), *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), pp. 78-96.

It becomes clear that at the core of P-C worship is the expectation, facilitation and aim of an experiential encounter with the immanent presence of God, expressed in terms of the works, gifts and activity of the Third Person of the Trinity. The *telos* of the worship time is, in the words of practitioners, to ‘break through into the presence of God’<sup>154</sup>. P-C worship has become a tool to enable the church gathered to ‘experience God now’<sup>155</sup>.

In P-C worship, the purpose of sung worship is not only the glorification of God, the corporate and individual expression of thanksgiving, the edification of the body, the facilitation of surrender, but also, and perhaps *primarily* to encounter the presence of God.<sup>156</sup> Whereas those who promote more traditional liturgical forms of worship favour other paradigms for worship such as the current trend towards worship as ‘formation’<sup>157</sup>, P-C worship places *encounter* – human experience of the living reality of God by His Spirit - centre stage.

P-C Worship is a container and a conduit then for a deep form of spirituality; a way of understanding and entering close divine-human relationship. This focus on divine-human engagement in worship means that the goal of sung worship is principally dynamic encounter with God.<sup>158</sup> This is the musical journey to ‘intimacy’ Wimber evangelised to the Anglican church.

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<sup>154</sup> Scotland, p. 64.

<sup>155</sup> Brown, p. 185.

<sup>156</sup> See e.g., Brown, p.181; Ward, p. 199 and Steven, pp. 118-130.

<sup>157</sup> See for example, James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love : The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2016).

<sup>158</sup> Wimber, *Worship: Intimacy with God*, pp. 4-6. For discussion see pp. 142-144 of Williams, “Charismatic Worship”.



This expectation of encounter in and through sung worship is the crucial distinguishing feature, or ‘philosophy’ of P-C worship praxis. It is a belief and expectation, indeed an ‘informal theology’ that affects not only the individual worshipper but the whole collective gathering and their understanding of the church and their approach to the world. It is an informal theology that incubates an informal ontology. It speaks foundationally of how God and the world relate and of the very nature of being and acting in the world as a Creature; of participating in divine reality.

The challenge is of course, that this notion of ‘encounter’ in sung worship is primarily located in an experience-led, praxis-embedded, pre-reflective, theological world; the ‘prima’ theology of Fagerberg. Typical articulations from those within the movement of the notions of ‘encounter’ and ‘presence’ therefore tend to be limited, talking of “the warmth of the presence within” where worship brings our emotions “into touch with the presence of God”<sup>159</sup>. Sung worship, “bring(s) God’s presence close to the worshippers...”<sup>160</sup>, and causes, “an increase in the power and presence of God into the meeting”<sup>161</sup>. It is not uncommon for those within the movement to articulate authentic worship as to whether ‘God showed up’<sup>162</sup>.

If 40 years ago, Colin Buchannan was right in his judgement that, “the key to the Charismatic Movement is its worship. Its influence upon the future is more significantly in the sphere of worship than elsewhere...”<sup>163</sup>, then there is a clear and pressing need to theologically deepen the P-C worship spirituality and find ways to construct theologies that can not only establish

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<sup>159</sup> Scotland, p. 68.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, p. 76.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Buchanan, *Encountering Charismatic Worship*. p. 9.

but critique P-C worship praxis. How can helpful foundations for the informal theology that is already felt and known by P-C worshippers – the implicit ‘genius’ of P-C praxis - be built?<sup>164</sup>

This is what we will explore in the following chapter. What deeper theological excavation has been done already around P-C worship and the divine-human relationship? What are the questions and where are the gaps?

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<sup>164</sup> “[The conviction that...] implicit within Pentecostal spirituality and practice is a unique theological ‘genius’ that – when articulated – has a distinct apostolate to the church Catholic and has unique contributions to make to the broader Christian academy.” Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, p. xiv.

## Chapter 4: Theological Themes, Opportunities and Challenges

### 1. Introduction

The ‘ideological core’ of P-C worship seems clear. The ritual expressions of P-C worship should not be seen as peripheral but rather as key identifiers of a core spirituality, worldview and ultimately, theology<sup>1</sup>. This theology is centred on a distinct understanding of divine-human relations that emphasises personal and corporate experiential encounter with the immanent presence of God by the agency of the Spirit. The close relationship between God and humanity is at the heart of P-C worship.

However, although the experience of God is central to the aim of P-C worship, there must be an equal striving towards theologizing it, as Green recognises: “we are left, then, with many witnesses affirming that God is present, but without any agreed-upon sense of how we are to speak of that presence... There can be no faithful believing where there is no push for faithful understanding.”<sup>2</sup>

This chapter explores what attempts have been made to articulate this instinctual understanding of divine-human relationship observed and experienced in P-C worship praxis. Is there an existing grammar, theological logic, that aids dialogue, deepens understanding, and challenges praxis? Moreover, what further theological themes and challenges emerge in wider literature on P-C worship related to this central motif of encounter with God by the Spirit?

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<sup>1</sup> See also, Albrecht, *Rites In The Spirit*, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Green, ‘In Your Presence Is Fullness of Joy’, pp.189-90. Cf. p. 189: “we strive always to discern more theological ways of identifying what happens in God’s coming near to us.”

## 2. Theological themes

### 2.1. Personal encounter & intimacy: “the highest and most fulfilling calling”

For a P-C worshipper singing songs in church is an activity that facilitates deeply personal connection with God. This experiential, existential reality is the ‘inward reality’ or ‘invisible grace’ of what could be called the sacramental activity of singing.<sup>3</sup> It is, to borrow language from the wider tradition, a kind of ‘means of grace’, as Ward provocatively summarises: “This means that as the Mass is for Catholics and the sermon is for Protestants, so the singing of songs for Charismatics.”<sup>4</sup> The time of worship is never a “directionless sing along”<sup>5</sup> but a “relationally orientated” activity to “personally engage in a worshipping dialogue with God.”<sup>6</sup>

There is thus a collective “consciousness of an active God in the midst of his people.”<sup>7</sup> Gathered worship is the place where, “God’s nearness has an extra reality.”<sup>8</sup> This emphasis on the immanence of God is captured in a statement by Vineyard theologian Don Williams: “As worship ascends, God comes down. He becomes experienced as immanent.”<sup>9</sup> Or as Philip Richter concludes in summary: “The God of the Charismatics is above all an immanent God who acts in the world.”<sup>10</sup> This is a specific understanding of divine activity upon and within the human worshippers that the American theologian Sarah Koenig calls, the ‘operative presence’ of P-C worship.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For discussion see next chapter and Drake; Koenig; Ruth and Lim.

<sup>4</sup> Ward, p.199.

<sup>5</sup> Ingalls, *The Spirit of Praise*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Koenig, p. 146. It is thus, according to Ingalls, “characterized by a ‘goal-orientated progression.’” *The Spirit of Praise*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, p. 185.

<sup>8</sup> “...when the church gathers” *ibid.* p. 185. Scriptures such as Corinthians 14:24-25 and Matthew 18:20 are often used to support this.

<sup>9</sup> Commenting on Wimber’s view of worship for the Vineyard church – see Don Williams, “Charismatic Worship”, p. 143.

<sup>10</sup> See, p. 100 Philip Richter, “The Toronto Blessing: Charismatic Evangelical Global Warming” in Hunt, Hamilton, and Walter.

<sup>11</sup> Koenig, p. 150.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, identity markers of this ‘operative presence’ can be multiple – from the overt singing in tongues, or prophetic words, through to the subtle stillness of a planned or spontaneous musical interlude between songs.<sup>12</sup> All of these elements contribute to a sense of the worship as being: “an atmosphere pregnant with the power of God”<sup>13</sup> which can be “dramatic and unpredictable”<sup>14</sup>.

This understanding of divine-human relationship is the heart of the ‘worldview’ implicit in P-C worship practice. It is a set of passionate beliefs and expectations that God will be encountered in singing. It is a philosophy focused on ‘intimacy’ and experiential Union with God.<sup>15</sup> Begbie in one of the early articles on the spirituality of renewal music puts it like this: “there is the conviction that God himself is the primary agent in worship, and that he draws us into a profoundly personal relationship with himself.” What is crucial here is that for the P-C worshipper, worship is a chance to participate in God’s “dynamic life”<sup>16</sup>. This experiential participation in God makes sense of some of the self-articulation of worshippers that there are “extra dimensions of worship possible”.<sup>17</sup>

This expectation is so strong that a sense of personally and corporately experiencing the reality of God’s presence acts as the lens for discerning, and the foundation of defining, corporate worship:

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<sup>12</sup> Steven, for example, locates this encounter in three areas of Charismatic praxis: “extended periods of congregational singing, inspired individual participation, and prayers for healing. Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, p. 181

<sup>14</sup> Brown, p. 182. This leads to “innovative patterns of ritual” as we have already described. Cf. Steven, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> See Smith, *Thinking In Tongues*, pp. 27-28, and Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Begbie, “The Spirituality of Renewal Music”, p. 232.

<sup>17</sup> Brown, p. 182.

While some Christians might assume they had worshipped because they had sung or prayed words that express God's glory, the Charismatic will look also for some personal sense of having made contact with God.<sup>18</sup>

Both Ward and Steven agree with this notion of encounter being the axiomatic marker of P-C worship. Ward writes: "...when people sing songs together they meet God... The songs mediate this encounter."<sup>19</sup> Similarly Scotland notes how the songs are "vehicles for making the intimate contact with God."<sup>20</sup>

From the Pentecostal perspective, Wacker observes that "experience has undeniably functioned as a cornerstone of Holy Ghost (Spirit) worship from the beginning" for P-C worship. Moreover, Keith Warrington notes that there are "two pertinent words when referring to Pentecostal spirituality... 'expectancy' and 'encounter'."<sup>21</sup> There is an expectation of "divine invasion".<sup>22</sup>

### *2.1.1. Wimber, intimacy and union with God*

The most influential articulation (certainly for the Charismatic Anglican networks in the UK)<sup>23</sup> of this personal dynamic of P-C sung worship has been from the late Vineyard leader John Wimber, who claimed to have a "well-thought-out philosophy" for Vineyard worship<sup>24</sup>. For Wimber, sung worship was the act of "freely giving love to God"<sup>25</sup>. This is the 'why' of

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<sup>18</sup> Brown, p. 181. Similarly, Scotland observes: "To truly worship God is therefore to meet and experience the Lord in an intimate and tender way", p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> Ward, pp. 106-7; cf. p. 189.

<sup>20</sup> Scotland, p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> Warrington, p. 219.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit : The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Unicoi, Tenn.: Trinity Foundation, 2001), p. 137.

<sup>23</sup> Certainly in the UK context of P-C worship within the Anglican church as already discussed.

<sup>24</sup> Wimber, *Worship: Intimacy with God*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

worship: “Our heart’s desire should be to worship God; we have been designed by God for this purpose. If we don’t worship God, we’ll worship something or someone else.”<sup>26</sup>

Built on the foundation of this personal motivation, there are then five ‘phases’<sup>27</sup> that the time of singing will go through.<sup>28</sup> Crucially, though, all of these phases are secondary to the prime destination of worship - personal encounter with God: “As we pass through these phases we are headed toward one goal: intimacy with God. I define intimacy as belonging to or revealing one’s deepest nature to another (in this case to God), and it is marked by close association, presence, and contact.”<sup>29</sup> To summarise, the five phases are:

1. A call to worship which “sets the tone for the gathering and directs people to God.”<sup>30</sup>
2. Engagement<sup>31</sup>: “the electrifying dynamic of connection to God and to each other.”  
During this phase the “manifest presence of God is magnified and multiplied” due to the coming together of all the worshippers to praise God through music and prayer. For Wimber, as more time is spent in this phase, the worshipper and God become closer and closer until “more and more loving and intimate language” is used. There is an increase in the praise given to God by the worshipper. Wimber here reminds his readers that “the heart of worship is to be united with our Creator”. But notably he doesn’t end

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Variations on this pattern seem to exist in Wimber’s work, for example elsewhere the ritual pathway is described as: 1. A call to worship; 2. Engagement; 3. Exaltation; 4. Adoration; 5. Intimacy. See: Basden, p. 143.

<sup>28</sup> Steven does some interesting work comparing this progression in P-C worship time to the mystical tradition: see James H. S. Steven, “The Spirit in Contemporary Charismatic Worship,” in Theresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (eds.), *The Spirit in Worship - Worship in the Spirit*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), p. 252: “The significance of this form of worship lies in its character as a ritual pathway by which Charismatics learn to encounter God.”

<sup>29</sup> Wimber, *Worship: Intimacy with God*, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

there – this Union is to be with the “church universal and historic...what has been called the communion of saints.”<sup>32</sup>

3. Expression: Now, in this state of intimacy, Union with God and with the church unseen in worship, the worshipper has been “wakened to His presence”.<sup>33</sup> This is a phase in the time of sung worship where God’s presence has an active engagement with the human worshipper and has causality: for example: “Tears may flow as we see our disharmony but his harmony; our limitations but his unlimited possibilities.”<sup>34</sup> The presence of God leads to a response from the worshippers – physical and emotional.
4. Visitation<sup>35</sup>: After a climax of human response, an expectation of God tangibly ‘moving’ amongst the people comes: “now is the time to wait for God to respond...stop talking and wait for him to speak, to move.”<sup>36</sup> Wimber calls this a ‘visitation’ and it is a “by-product of worship”:

We don’t worship in order to gain his presence. He is worthy to be worshipped whether or not he visits us. But God ‘dwells in the praises of his people’<sup>37</sup>. So we should always come to worship prepared for an audience with the King. And we should expect the Spirit of God to work among us.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> A reference to Ps 22.3 which Ruth claims as foundational in the historical development of P-C worship praxis (See: Ruth, "The Sacramentality of Contemporary Worship".)

<sup>38</sup> Wimber, *Worship: Intimacy with God*, p. 14.



This ‘visitation’ of God’s presence at work among the worshippers is “sometimes for salvation, sometimes for deliverances, sometimes for sanctification or healings, [or a visitation] through the prophetic gifts.”<sup>39</sup>

5. The Giving of Substance: “We are the first partakers of the fruit. But we are not to eat the seed, we are to sow it, to give it away”.<sup>40</sup> All of the worshipper’s enjoyment of God’s life and presence should lead to generosity - a giving of time, energy and money to God and to others. “God should have ownership of everything.”<sup>41</sup>

Several features emerge from Wimber’s description: Firstly, his understanding of close divine-human relationship in worship as not just something for the corporate gathering but as central for the whole life of the believer. Phase 5 illustrates this requirement and belief that intimacy with God be discerned by, and result in, surrender to God who has ‘ownership of everything’. In the words of current Vineyard pastor and theologian, Frank Emmanuel: “intimacy is what empowers the Christian to participate in God’s activity in the world.”<sup>42</sup>

Secondly, relatedly, there is clearly a communal dimension to Wimber’s understanding of intimacy with God. It is not merely an ‘individual’, self-orientated concept for him but a joining to the historic and global faith, the ‘communion of saints’.

Thirdly, Wimber is very Christo-centric in his articulation that the time of worship is about having “an audience with the King”. He is also, as expected, Spirit-orientated, with the activity

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Frank Emanuel, "John Wimber's Liturgical Spirituality," Unpublished Paper, ([https://www.academia.edu/15212433/John\\_Wimbers\\_Liturgical\\_Spirituality](https://www.academia.edu/15212433/John_Wimbers_Liturgical_Spirituality), 2009). p. 1.

of God amongst the worshippers articulated as the work of the Spirit. However, how the two relate in facilitating the intimacy between human and divine is entirely missing as is any real Trinitarian reflection.

Fourthly, for Wimber, the very heart of worship is the possibility of Union with God. Although what is missing here is any further reflection on the nature or mechanics of that Union, it is clear that Union with God is the climax of the 'engagement' phase of worship. Out of this Union flows physical expression and response as well as God moving amidst and speaking to the congregation.

If there was any doubt as to the centrality of 'intimacy' and Union with God, Wimber ends his teaching on these five phases of worship by returning to the central goal: "As we experience these phases of worship we experience intimacy with God, *the highest and most fulfilling calling* men and women may know".<sup>43</sup>

Steven is correct therefore in his judgement that P-C worship in its emphasis on intimate encounter with God has, "distinct understandings of the nature of communion with God"<sup>44</sup>. Wimber is espousing and laying the foundations for something that seemed to some like a whole *new* "theology of worship"<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Wimber, *Worship: Intimacy with God*, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> Steven, *Worship In The Spirit*, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Doug Banister, *The Word and Power Church : What Happens When a Church Experiences All God Has to Offer?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1999). p. 86. He uses this term in describing Wimber's emphasis on encounter in particular. [Cited in Anna E. Nekola, "Between This World and the Next: The Musical "Worship Wars" and Evangelical Ideology in the United States, 1960--2005" (Ph.D., The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 2009).]

### *2.1.2. Critical voices*

This articulation of P-C worship as ‘intimacy’ has attracted many critical voices, centered around three key areas:

Firstly, that intimacy is too emotional a category and allows worship to become hostage to cultural trends such as romanticism.<sup>46</sup> According to Stackhouse, P-C worship is an adapted form of “cultural immanentism” and part of the wider move of cultural “immediacy”, with the purpose of songs shifting from fulfilling a didactic role focused on the saving work of God in Christ, to an experiential role reflecting a cultural mood of “romanticism”<sup>47</sup>. In this analysis, the spiritual immediacy of P-C worship is thus a product of the wider postmodern era.

This elusive and ‘burdensome obsession’ with romanticism<sup>48</sup> stands in contrast with the notion of free grace in Christ through more traditional sacramental and liturgical worship<sup>49</sup>. P-C worship thus focuses on the emotion that may be elicited by the gospel message, rather than focusing on the gospel message itself. Underlying this critique is a deeper difference – that communion with God should be built on remembrance more than experience:

Hence, communion with God in Charismatic revivalism is not so much the result of recalling the theological inheritance of the grace of God in Christ, but of getting something from the worship experience itself.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For example, Stackhouse, p. 96, warns of the danger of, “losing oneself in amorous feelings”. Building on Ward, Steven, p. 253, views the Charismatic notion of ‘encounter’ as romanticized to some extent: “the climax of Union with God is cast in terms of the romantic self”; cf. p. 252: “The worshiper is led into a personal mystical experience, characterized by an intimate and even romantic embrace of and by God; cf. Ward, pp. 151-62.

<sup>47</sup> Stackhouse, p. 54-55.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

The eschatological goal of worship in Christ is thus sacrificed on the altar of the “individualism of...romantic intimacy.”<sup>51</sup>

This idea that P-C worship is merely a reflection or capitulation to contemporary culture at the expense of compromising gospel values is found in numerous other works.<sup>52</sup> One major study focuses entirely on the “endless appropriation of popular culture” in contemporary worship, primarily manifested as an “adrenaline-charged worship experience akin to a U2 concert”<sup>53</sup>. Bryan Spinks voices a similar concern: “It may be that this style of worship has so compromised with the prevailing culture that it is not true worship at all, but simply an exaggerated form of a cultural incantation.”<sup>54</sup> Rob Warner agrees, arguing that worship has adopted uncritically a very narrow contemporary cultural frame and is subsequently, “shaped neither by biblical literacy nor a coherent theological framework.”<sup>55</sup> Even stronger is the sentiment of Philip Greensdale: “much Evangelical worship is so ‘user-friendly’ that it reflects the therapeutic needs and entertainment expectations of consumers...”. Greensdale goes as far as to equate such worship with cannabis – ‘numbing’ the minds of congregations.<sup>56</sup> All of these critical voices seem to agree with Stackhouse’s feeling that Charismatic worship is in danger of sacrificing “theological and spiritual integrity on the altar of contemporaneity, expediency and revivalism”.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Steven, p. 197.

<sup>52</sup> See for example, Kimon Howland Sargeant, *Seeker Churches : Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> Kate Bowler and Wen Reagan, "Bigger, Better, Louder: The Prosperity Gospel's Impact on Contemporary Christian Worship," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 24, no. 2 (2014). p. 187.

<sup>54</sup> Bryan D. Spinks, "Worship," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. Kathryn Tanner, John Webster, Iain Torrance (Oxford, UK: OUP, 2007). p. 386.

<sup>55</sup> Rob Warner and David Bebbington, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism, 1966-2001 : A Theological and Sociological Study*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2007). pp. 72-73.

<sup>56</sup> Philip Greenslade, *Worship in the Best of Both Worlds : An Exploration of the Polarities of Truthful Worship*, Deep Church (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009). p. 141. Holmes goes on to give further examples, including Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching out without Dumbing Down : A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>57</sup> Stackhouse. p. 43.

Scholarly voices against this dismissal of the ‘intimacy’ motif in P-C worship are few and far between. One of the few is the Scottish Baptist Theologian, Steven Holmes. Holmes argues that such critics often “misunderstand contemporary worship at every turn.”<sup>58</sup> P-C worship<sup>59</sup> doesn’t adopt cultural impulses uncritically but rather ‘negotiates’ with culture, adopting practices but not without first modifying and critically adapting them.<sup>60</sup>

The second area of criticism is that P-C worship is too one-dimensional in its obsession with intimacy as the goal of worship. Whilst recognising that the pursuit of intimacy with God is a valid part of the Christian mystic tradition, commentators argue that the theme occurs with “relentless monotony”<sup>61</sup> in P-C worship. The idea of some kind of mystical Union with God has been the victim of “excessive plundering” by the P-C movement<sup>62</sup>: “When intimacy is the only theme to emerge in our worship then the church is guilty of allowing one prominent, contemporary metaphor to ‘overcome the checks, balances, and ballast that the whole Catholic tradition provides.’”<sup>63</sup>

This apparent dominance of one central theme in worship leads to “sickness for the movement as a whole”,<sup>64</sup> resulting in a “pathology” in worship, as the church “loses sight of the wider theological and pastoral perspective”.<sup>65</sup> Stackhouse, in particular, argues that the focus on intimacy and extreme communion with God forgets “the essential backdrop to the doctrine of grace, which is judgement.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> In reference specifically to Marva Dawn. Holmes. p. 194, fn. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Holmes chooses to call it ‘Contemporary Worship’.

<sup>60</sup> Holmes. p. 192.

<sup>61</sup> Stackhouse, p. 56.

<sup>62</sup> Stackhouse. p. 57.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

The third critique is that P-C worship is a form of gnostic escapism. Here the worshipper is seen as being in pursuit of a ‘spiritual’ experience which can only be obtained by leaving behind physical and created matter.<sup>67</sup> This emphasis on spiritual immediacy leads to the loss of any theological notion of mediation.<sup>68</sup> The result feared is a “loss of transcendence...God is all too near.”<sup>69</sup>

By making God immediately accessible, primarily understood as an experiential reality of ‘intimacy’, P-C worship theology moves away from concepts of mediation of the divine through physical elements (sacramental), incubating rather a (hidden) notion of unmediated presence.<sup>70</sup> This “individualistic emphasis on the unmediated”, is part of Enlightenment-influenced thinking<sup>71</sup>. P-C worship thus diminishes the incarnational dimensions of traditional Christian spirituality and sacramental theology.<sup>72</sup> The church is subsequently left with more of an ecstatic<sup>73</sup> view of worship and divine-human relations rather than a thoroughly ‘incarnational’ one. P-C worship is thus, in its very nature as a theology built on spiritual

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<sup>67</sup> See for example Stackhouse’s discussion on p. 173. Stackhouse’s solution is to tie Charismatic experience to the traditional sacraments of baptism and communion and thus ground Pneumatology in Christology.

<sup>68</sup> A simple definition of mediation is covered by Cumin: “a way of asking how God might be other than the world in a way that does not mean he is indistinguishable from it.” See, Paul Bradley Cumin, “Christ at the Crux : The Mediation of Creator and Creation in Systematic Christological Perspective” (PhD, University of London, King’s College London, 2007). p. xi; cf Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian Faith : An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Oxford, UK, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002). p. 5f.

<sup>69</sup> Stackhouse. p. 127.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 128. See also, Colwell, *Promise and Presence*. I argue for a ‘mediated immediacy’ in my 2008 paper (Drake, *Towards a Sacramental Understanding*), as does Peter D. Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience : An Ecumenical Encounter*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2012). p. 31 who builds on the work of Dale M. Schlitt, *Theology and the Experience of God*, American Liberal Religious Thought, (New York: P. Lang, 2001). pp. 35-56. Cartledge is helpful here in his recent work too: Mark J. Cartledge, *The Mediation of the Spirit : Interventions in Practical Theology*, Pentecostal Manifestos Series (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015). pp. 64-75.

<sup>71</sup> Colwell, p. 11.

<sup>72</sup> Stackhouse. pp. 127-8.

<sup>73</sup> Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement : A Study of Metaphor, Rationality, and the Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989); Stackhouse. p. 127.

immediacy, ‘non-sacramental’.<sup>74</sup> The main way by which God can be encountered is through an ‘immanent immediacy’ contained in the time of sung worship.<sup>75</sup>

In failing to have a sense of incarnational mediation, P-C worship thus collapses God into the world and fails to preserve the necessary boundary or ‘space’ between the divine and the human<sup>76</sup>. In contrast, sacramental worship is proposed as superior, due to its theology and praxis, holding divine transcendence and immanence in tension. This theology of worship allows ‘true’ encounter for the worshipper.<sup>77</sup>

As a form of experiential immanentism, P-C worship therefore fails to protect the particularity of divine and human in the encounter. P-C worship thus acts as a Trojan horse – seemingly offering intimate communion between divine and human whilst carrying a hidden theology that precludes precisely such relationality. According to Stackhouse, P-C worship “appears to offer direct access and intimacy, but, in fact, offers no such thing”<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Stackhouse. p. 127: “Musicians rather than pastors and theologians are constructing worship, and its hallmark is worship that is immediate, intimate and most definitely non-sacramental (indeed immediacy and non-sacramental are two ways of saying the same thing)”.

<sup>75</sup> M. Horton, *In the Face of God: The Dangers and Delights of Spiritual Intimacy*, (Dallas: Word, 1996), p. 157. Commentators such as Horton conclude: “The contemporary style, in which music plays an important part, is now viewed by many as the only means of grace.”.

<sup>76</sup> See for example Stackhouse, p. 128.

<sup>77</sup> “Through the instrumentality of mediated grace, true encounter is allowed to take place, without this ever violating the notion of the other: through means of grace, God is allowed space to be.” Ibid, p. 127.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 128.

## 2.2. Personhood and the activity of the Spirit: A 'pneumatology through doxology'<sup>79</sup>

From beginning to end, Pentecostal worship is 'an *epiclesis*' – an invocation of the Holy Spirit<sup>80</sup>

If P-C worship was to be defined in one sentence it is "communion with the Spirit and the people of God".<sup>81</sup> Indeed P-C worship has been articulated informally within the movement as 'worship *in the Spirit*'.<sup>82</sup> The person and activity of the Holy Spirit is the central agency of the encounter experienced in P-C worship.<sup>83</sup> The Spirit is said to be the "controller of the worship event".<sup>84</sup> This pneumato-centric form of worship is rooted in the Charismatic experience of the 'personal epiclesis'<sup>85</sup> that is baptism in the Spirit. The presence of God *is* the presence of the Holy Spirit<sup>86</sup>. P-C Worship is, in a sense, the experience of baptism in the Spirit *ongoing*.<sup>87</sup> Thus, P-C worship can be said to have a distinct "worshipful relationship with God the Holy Spirit"<sup>88</sup> and, "distinct understandings of the nature of communion with God"<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> Chris Russell, "Skepsis," *Anglicans For Renewal* 70 (Autumn 1997). p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Charismatics understand the "primary mode of the sacred, the presence of God [as] the Holy Spirit." D. Augustine, "Liturgy, Theosis, and the Renewal of the World", p. 167.

<sup>81</sup> Kimberly Ervin Alexander, "Singing Heavenly Music: R.Hollis Gause's Theology of Worship and Pentecostal Experience," in *Toward a Theology of Pentecostal Worship*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016). p. 220.

<sup>82</sup> See for example the title of Steven's 2002 book, 'Worship In The Spirit'.

<sup>83</sup> One of the theological heroes of the movement is Gordon Fee who identifies the Spirit as "the experienced, empowering return of God's own personal presence in and among us." Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994). p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> Warrington. p. 223.

<sup>85</sup> John R. K. Fenwick and Bryan D. Spinks, *Worship in Transition: The Liturgical Movement in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Continuum, 1995). p. 112.

<sup>86</sup> Elliott, p. 140.

<sup>87</sup> Pete Ward likewise argues that it is a praxis that pursues a "continual communion" as distinct from the one off encounter of the traditional Pentecostal spirit baptism doctrine: "For the Soul Survivor generation [a major Charismatic Anglican Youth Festival in the UK] baptism in the Spirit had been largely replaced by the idea of *the every day life of intimacy with God in worship*. The effect of this was that encounter with God as a past event at conversion, or even with a baptism in the Spirit had been replaced by a more regular and continual communion with God. The life of the disciple was expressed in terms of coming regularly to God in worship" Ward, *Selling Worship*, p. 202 (emphasis mine).

<sup>88</sup> Steven, p. 171.

<sup>89</sup> James H.S. Steven, *'Worship in the Spirit': Charismatic Worship in the Church of England* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2002). p. 3.



Charismatics expect to witness and experience the active, evidential movement of the third person of the Trinity as they gather to sing: “The Holy Spirit is moving among his people as they worship”.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, it is the exercise of spiritual gifts by any and everyone in the room, in an orderly way, that indicates the activity of God by his Spirit in worship<sup>91</sup>.

This activity of the Spirit in and amongst the people is one of the key visible signs of the ‘intimacy’ or ‘encounter’ longed for. In fact, Brown claims that Charismatics rely on the manifestation of the Spirit’s power as the key way to discern authentic worship: “their understanding of the Spirit’s work is so dynamic that they think of his presence in terms of what he does.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, “the Spirit has been rescued from being no more than a theoretical third person of the Trinity.”<sup>93</sup> Steven too notes the claim that, “the gift of ‘Charismatic worship’ to the church has been functionally to restore the Holy Spirit to our services.”<sup>94</sup>

Elliott similarly observes:

In the Charismatic mental map individuals in the physical world can have a relationship with the Godhead through having a friendship with Christ which is ‘empowered’ by the Holy Spirit....it can be said that it is the presence of God in the form of the Holy Spirit which has functional primacy.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Brown, p. 181.

<sup>91</sup> “The active exercise of spiritual gifts means that the whole congregation may be engaged in Charismatic worship. Rather than passive observers, worshippers become active participants. In Wimber’s phrase, ‘Everybody gets to play’”. Williams, “Charismatic Worship”, p. 146.

<sup>92</sup> Brown, p. 181.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 188.

<sup>94</sup> Stackhouse, p. 145.

<sup>95</sup> Elliott, p. 135.

Thus, P-C worship has a “distinctive understanding of the Spirit”.<sup>96</sup> It is an understanding of the Spirit that is birthed out of experiential praxis: “Distinctive Charismatic Pneumatology is fashioned within and from corporate worship; it is Pneumatology-through-doxology.”<sup>97</sup> Steven argues that this Pneumatology is more akin to Eastern Orthodox tradition in its affirmation of the divine person of the Spirit and the Spirit’s activity in the economy of God in the world. Charismatic worship thus celebrates the *freedom* of the Spirit.<sup>98</sup> In doing so, Charismatics, “are led, like Basil, to an understanding of worship as a transforming event, or to put it more theologically, a redemptive event.”<sup>99</sup>

Steven links this emphasis with the failure of the Western tradition (based on Augustine’s *De Trinitate*) to give “adequate theological weight to the free person of the Spirit.”<sup>100</sup> Steven traces the source of this mistake to the *filioque* clause and “the Western subordination of the Spirit’s economy to a spiritual grace.”<sup>101</sup> This ‘spiritual grace’ is either found in the institution (Catholicism) or in the internal vivifying spirit of the worshipper (what Steven refers to as Protestant Piety).<sup>102</sup> Charismatic worship thus has the potential to avoid this compromise of the Spirit’s freedom as a distinct person of the Trinity acting in the economy of God in the world.

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<sup>96</sup> Steven, p. 172, fn. 20.

<sup>97</sup> Russell, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> See Steven’s discussion pp. 180-182, *Worship In The Spirit*, on Western and Eastern understandings of the Spirit in the Trinity.

<sup>99</sup> Steven, p. 180.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 182.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 183.

<sup>102</sup> See Steven, p. 183. Steven builds on the work of T. F. Torrance in this area.

Charismatic worship can, he argues, be affirmed for giving expression to the very nature of the church as understood by ‘Anglican-Orthodox’ tradition – “[a] community which lives by continually invoking the Holy Spirit”<sup>103</sup>:

In many ways, by celebrating the Spirit in a way that draws attention to his dynamic relationship as a distinct hypostasis to the worshipping community, [Charismatic worship] stands much closer to the Eastern theological tradition of the Cappadocians than its native Western tradition... The latter has found it more difficult to celebrate the distinct hypostasis of the Spirit, particularly within the economy of God’s action in the world.<sup>104</sup>

True worship, for P-C worshippers, can thus only be attained by the agency and life of the Holy Spirit: “Ideally nothing is done in Charismatic worship without the leading of the Spirit”.<sup>105</sup> In fact, Wimber provocatively summarised it thus: ““If ever there is a choice between the smart thing to do and the move of the Holy Spirit, I will always land on the side of the Spirit.”<sup>106</sup> Worshippers are therefore conscious that, “their words and actions have no meaning without the Holy Spirit’s energizing.”<sup>107</sup> Everything is done “at the Spirit’s prompting” and being ‘open’ to the Spirit becomes a central posture<sup>108</sup>. This leads to a ‘mood’ or (more currently termed) ‘atmosphere’<sup>109</sup> in P-C worship of divine presence.

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<sup>103</sup> Kallistos, Colin Davey, and Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission., *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue : The Moscow Statement Agreed by the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission, 1976 : With Introductory and Supporting Material* (London: SPCK, 1977). p. 91 quoted in Cocksworth, *Holy*, p. 186.

<sup>104</sup> Steven, p. 180. For Steven, Charismatic worship thus stands over against the Western tradition and is more aligned with Eastern Trinitarian theology - for further discussion see pp. 182-183.

<sup>105</sup> Brown, p. 180.

<sup>106</sup> Carol Wimber, *John Wimber: The Way It Was* ( London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999). p. 148.

<sup>107</sup> Brown, p. 188.

<sup>108</sup> Brown, p. 180.

<sup>109</sup> See for example, ‘Holy Spirit You Are Welcome Here’ by Bryan and Katie Towalt. CCLI# 6087919.

The critical voice here would argue that P-C worship in its praxis communicates a ‘non-christological’ Pneumatology which violates human freewill: “...through sacrament human freedom is protected from the possibility of being overwhelmed by the Spirit, understood non-christologically.”<sup>110</sup> P-C worship holds such a narrow Pneumatology (equating the Spirit merely as the “immanent, intimate side of God”<sup>111</sup>) that it fails to realise the transcendence inherent in the Spirit’s nature as divine person of the Godhead<sup>112</sup>. A model of worship is therefore needed that “transcends the category of the phenomenal, positing a faith that is rooted in ontological and Trinitarian categories.”<sup>113</sup>

The second critique of the Spirit-centric emphasis of P-C worship is the seeming over-reliance on experience as sole mediator or sign of true encounter. The experience of the effects of the Spirit essentially replaces the sacraments (or the preaching of the word for more Reformed traditions) as the means of grace.<sup>114</sup> This approach to worship “introduces a motivation that is antithetical to the worshipping life of the church.”<sup>115</sup>

For Charismatics, Stackhouse claims, this emphasis on experience can reduce the objective truth of the gospel and the nature of God himself. Assurance is discerned by *experience*: “communion with God in Charismatic revivalism is not so much the result of recalling the theological inheritance of the grace of God in Christ, but of getting something from the worship experience itself.”<sup>116</sup> This, in turn, leads to, “a view of sanctification too dependent on continual

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<sup>110</sup> Stackhouse, p. 127.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 183.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid: “The Spirit, of course, is no less transcendent than the Father and the Son”.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 128.

<sup>114</sup> See Michael Scott Horton, *In the Face of God: The Dangers and Delights of Spiritual Intimacy* (Dallas: Word, 1996). p. 157. Cf. Stackhouse, p. 48.

<sup>115</sup> Stackhouse, p. 47.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 58. This is, he argues, due to the postmodern turn towards the authority of experience. Faith needs experience to have validity.

receiving rather than on the initial grace of Christ.”<sup>117</sup> Could P-C worship simply be symptomatic of the world’s agenda to place “existential experience and individual fulfilment at the centre”?<sup>118</sup>

### ***2.3. Spirit actualizes Christian reality fulfilling human potential***

If P-C worship facilitates heightened spiritual experiences does it also propagate a negative view of the body and humanity itself?

In its limited language of articulating the work of the Spirit, P-C worship is seen by some to be vulnerable to a ‘hyper-spiritualism’ whereby the process of sanctification becomes a “denaturalising process – the destruction of human nature rather than its ennobling.”<sup>119</sup> Martyn Percy argues that often the language of power used in regard to worship and the Spirit colludes with this theological danger. Transformation or sanctification in worship is thus more seen as a move away from our humanity into something spiritual: “Christian living...is conceived as the art of becoming not what we are.”<sup>120</sup> However, others argue oppositely that the emphasis on the life of the spirit in the life of the worshipper is linked to a deeper theology that worship in the Spirit is about actualising Christian reality and expanding and fulfilling human potential.

Don Williams (‘Wimber’s Theologian’<sup>121</sup>) perhaps gives us the most robust and systematic attempt at a theology of P-C worship from those within the movement and acts as an example

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<sup>117</sup> Stackhouse, p. 169.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 55; Stackhouse asks: “What of worshipping God for his own sake?”, p. 186.

<sup>119</sup> Stackhouse, p. 182; cf. Ronald Knox critique of ‘enthusiastic’ spirituality: Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950).

<sup>120</sup> In Stackhouse, p. 127. See Martyn Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power : Understanding Contemporary Christian Fundamentalism and Revivalism* (London: S.P.C.K., 1996). pp. 77-8.

<sup>121</sup> See Jackson, *The Quest For The Radical Middle*. Jackson designates Williams as “one of the Vineyard’s premier theologians” (Kindle location 4390-4391). For a useful unpublished commentary on William’s theology of worship see also Luke Geraty, “Don Williams: Shaping the Theology, Praxis, and Culture of Worship in the Vineyard and Beyond.”

of this alternative positive view. He argues that the core distinctive of P-C worship is its belief that there is more to experience of the full life of God for worshipers, and that this happens through the Holy Spirit<sup>122</sup>. From the P-C worship perspective, humanity without the power of the Spirit, and Christianity without the fullness of the Spirit, is lacking and limited. Williams quotes the 20<sup>th</sup> Century writer A.W.Tozer who argues that for a doctrine to be of any substance in the church it has to be seen in reality: “prominent in our thoughts and [making]... a difference to our lives.” P-C worship therefore somehow actualizes Christian reality. As Williams states: “The gift of ‘Charismatic worship’ to the church has been functionally to restore the Holy Spirit to our services.”<sup>123</sup> Similarly Steven finds that the Spirit is the very “enabler of the human vocation to worship.”<sup>124</sup>

Tozer (and Williams) therefore accuse evangelicals (non-Charismatics) of being merely Trinitarian in *name* due to not giving enough emphasis, prominence, worship and glory to the Holy Spirit:

So completely do we ignore Him that it is only by courtesy that we can be called Trinitarian. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity boldly declares the equality of the Three Persons and the right of the Holy Spirit to be worshipped and glorified. Anything less than this is something less than Trinitarian.<sup>125</sup>

So for Williams and the Vineyard tradition he represents, P-C Worship, in emphasising Pneumatology, actually re-dresses the under-developed Pneumatology present in Evangelical

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<sup>122</sup> “Perhaps its distinctive is the desire for worshipers to experience some measure of the full life of the triune God, including the Holy Spirit.” Paul Basden, *Exploring the Worship Spectrum* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004). p. 145

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Steven, p. 183.

<sup>125</sup> A. W. Tozer, *A Treasury of A. W. Tozer*, (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1980), p. 40.

worship. The Spirit-emphasis enables the congregation to know and experience the *full* life of the triune God. The presence of the Spirit in P-C worship is about human flourishing.

Steven attempts to deepen the mechanics of how this dynamic of fulfilling human potential occurs: P-C worship can be seen as an “extended act of thanksgiving, witnessing to the Eucharistic nature of humanity.”<sup>126</sup> Humanity can worship because Jesus worshipped – in his humanity, by the Spirit, fulfilling the response of all Creation. He is the new Adam that: “embodies the reality of Christian worship, in which we participate through the power of the Spirit.”<sup>127</sup>

Moreover, this participation in Christ does not result in a loss of our own particularity but Steven suggests it is the work of the Spirit in the economy of God to preserve our particularity.

Colin Gunton too writes on this aspect of the Spirit’s work:

It is not a spirit of merging or assimilation – of homogenisation – but of relation in otherness, relation which does not subvert but establishes the other in its true reality...as the liberating Other, the Spirit respects the otherness and so particularity of those he elects.<sup>128</sup>

This transformation of the human emerges as a fruit and natural consequence of the intimacy that remains the primary goal of worship. Transformation is the work of the Spirit, making the worshipper more and more Christ-like.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Steven, p. 184.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p. 185.

<sup>128</sup> Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many : God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1993). pp. 182-3.

<sup>129</sup> Williams, *Charismatic Worship*, p. 146.

Williams doesn't go much further than this in his theologizing of intimacy and transformation, but does touch on Romans 6 and being united to Christ briefly: "We are broken before him in our sin and raised up to be like him in his grace." His focus is more towards 2 Corinthians 3.18, being changed from 'glory to glory' rather than the Romans 6 passage.<sup>130</sup> Articulation of this transforming effect of P-C worship on the human condition does not thus get much further than a vague notion of the power of God: "This transformation is due to "the power of God [which] is often manifest in this worship."<sup>131</sup>

#### ***2.4. Passive recipients or active participants?***

Does P-C worship advocate in its praxis a certain passivity in the worshippers? Steven believes that P-C worship communicates an "overwhelming emphasis" on worshippers as passive recipients of the Spirit in worship and ministry, "with very little account made of their own powers of self-determination, or of their identity as moral actors".<sup>132</sup> Thus, an 'I-IT'<sup>133</sup> relationship with the Spirit is formed whereby the Spirit is a depersonalised power, the 'presence' of God which acts upon a passive subject. Steven summarises: "The problem with this is the lack of affirmation of the prayer recipient as an authentic moral actor. Indeed, it is precisely the powers of self-determination that one relinquishes in order to become available for the Spirit's action."<sup>134</sup> This notion of the Spirit in Charismatic spirituality, as more of a substance than a person-in-relation, "threatens the reality of participant space, their own

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> James Steven, "The Spirit in Contemporary Charismatic Worship," in *The Spirit in Worship-Worship in the Spirit*, ed. Theresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009). p. 259.

<sup>133</sup> Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, (Edinburgh: Clark, 1959).

<sup>134</sup> Steven, p. 203.



otherness and particular unique freedom”.<sup>135</sup> However, against Steven, others such as Albrecht argue that P-C worship is highly responsive by its very nature.<sup>136</sup> It offers a spirituality “characterized by a readiness to respond to God.”<sup>137</sup>

## **2.5. Underdeveloped theology of the humanity of Christ?**

Wimber’s emphasis on P-C worshippers having an ‘audience with the King’ raises questions of Christology and the relationship between P-C worshippers and Christ. Steven finds that P-C worship emphasises Christ as risen and ascended Lord to the extent of obscuring his humanity.<sup>138</sup> Using the work of T. F. Torrance<sup>139</sup> he argues that Charismatic worship is an unfortunate extension of this historic liturgical tradition to “exalt the divinity of Christ at the expense of his human mediatorial role.”<sup>140</sup> This results in an emphasis on the separation between us and God rather than the unity (found in the humanity and brotherhood of Christ). The priestly and mediating role of Christ is thus diminished:<sup>141</sup>

The problem ... is not what it affirms, namely the New Testament’s teaching that the Spirit is given as a fruit of the ascension (John 16:5-7; Acts 2:33), but in what it tends

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Daniel E. Albrecht, "An Anatomy of Worship: A Pentecostal Analysis," in Wonsuk Ma, Robert P. Menzies, and Russell P. Spittler (eds.), *The Spirit and Spirituality : Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler*, (London ; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004). p. 71.

<sup>137</sup> Warrington. p. 221.

<sup>138</sup> Steven, p. 189. As Steven notes, this is not a new tension – the *Te Deum* and *Gloria in excelsis* of Anglican liturgical practice both do likewise.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, "The Mind of Christ in Worship: The Problem of Apollinarianism in the Liturgy," in *Theology in Reconciliation : Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (London: G. Chapman, 1975).

<sup>140</sup> Steven, p. 190.

<sup>141</sup> Torrance, *The Mind of Christ*, p. 142.

to deny, for there was little sense of the Spirit *dynamically incorporating the worshippers into the priestly Christ in his risen humanity*.<sup>142</sup>

The emphasis of P-C worship is thus more on the actions and invocations of the people gathered to worship rather than on the invitation of Christ to the worshippers to *join* with his risen ascended humanity, his worship.

For Steven, the Charismatic *epiclesis* or ‘Come Holy Spirit’ needs to be reframed by this theological horizon. Namely, the Spirit comes upon the worshiper precisely to enable their *response* to Christ’s invitation, as our high priest, to join in his worship of the Father.<sup>143</sup> This is the purpose of the empowerment for Steven. The praxis of Charismatic worship is thus in danger of being cut off from Christ’s offering of worship.

## **2.6. ‘Instinctive Trinitarianism’ and the Son/Spirit relationship**

P-C worship’s emphasis on the Spirit as the agency of encounter results naturally in an “increased awareness of the Trinitarian nature of God.”<sup>144</sup> However, this Trinitarian understanding of worship is underdeveloped<sup>145</sup> only being part of P-C worship instinct not developed theology<sup>146</sup>. P-C worship praxis lacks a truly mature Trinitarian character”<sup>147</sup> and

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<sup>142</sup> Steven, p. 192.

<sup>143</sup> See Ibid. p. 193 for more.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p. 171.

<sup>145</sup> Steven references the work of Peter Hocken, Tom Smail, Jean Jacques Suurmond, Chris Russell. See p.172.

<sup>146</sup> Steven, pp. 171-2 argues that P-C worship is indeed Trinitarian, but only ‘instinctually’ so. This is a phrase picked up by Anglican Chris Cocksworth too: Chris Cocksworth, "The Trinity Today: Opportunities and Challenges for Liturgical Study," *Studia Liturgica* 27, no. 1 (1997). Steven’s method is to look at the language used in extempore prayer and song lyrics as a basis for this ‘instinctive trinitarianism’ found in Charismatic worship. He finds that epicletic prayer is often still Trinitarian in reference to Father and Son. [It is important however to remember the unique factor of the Anglican context for his study which would give the leaders of worship meetings a instinctual basic knowledge of traditional (Trinitarian-framed) liturgy.]

<sup>147</sup> Steven, p. 208.

thus leads to an approximate view of the Trinity, such as: “the Son as the ascended and victorious king, the Spirit as the empowering presence, and the Father as the benevolent source of security and good gifts for his children.”<sup>148</sup> This may be due to the emphasis on the ‘now’ and the priority given to experience: “The most important thing for Pentecostals is not the doctrine [of the Trinity] per se, but the experience of the Trinity.”<sup>149</sup> What is clear is that any engagement with P-C worship necessarily involves engaging with Trinitarian theology, in particular the relationship between the second and third persons of the Trinity.

Theological discussion around the relationship of the Spirit and the Son in P-C tradition is most often centered on the *past event of Christ* and his incarnate nature. The debates between ‘logos’ and ‘spirit’ Christologies<sup>150</sup> often dominate the horizon when it comes to discussing the partnership and relationship between the Spirit and the Son. However, P-C worship praxis provokes the need to discuss *present day, human participation in the divine relationship*. There are two main areas to discuss: mediation and expectation.

Firstly, mediation. Steven argues that the ‘Trinitarian consciousness’ of P-C worship - prompted by emphasis on the distinct function in the gathering of the third person of the Trinity - is a “renewal of an orthodox Trinitarian understanding of worship ‘in the Spirit’.” This orthodoxy is reference to the two classic Trinitarian doxologies, one of which gives glory to the Spirit as well as Father and Son (“Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p. 170.

<sup>149</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and Amos Yong, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology : Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002). p. 103.

<sup>150</sup> For a survey of the positions: H. Hunter, "Spirit-Christology: Dilemma and Promise (1)," *Heythrop Journal* 24/2 (1983); Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit : Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Herschel Odell Bryant, *Spirit Christology in the Christian Tradition : From the Patristic Period to the Rise of Pentecostalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014); Lucy Peppiatt, "New Directions in Spirit Christology: A Foundation for a Charismatic Theology," *Theology* 117, no. 1 (2014).

Spirit”). The other offers praise to the Father, through the Son, *in* the Spirit.<sup>151</sup> Ultimately, Steven argues that P-C worship has an inherent danger of favouring the former doxology at the expense of the latter dislocating the Christological centre of Trinitarian worship – that is worship that is mediated *through* the Son.<sup>152</sup> A similar concern is raised by Chris Green:

When Pentecostals *do* take pains to describe God’s presence theologically in Trinitarian terms, the second-order descriptions often suggest that the Spirit has replaced the once-present and soon-returning Jesus, or that ‘Spirit’ is simply another name for Jesus in his post-ascension heavenly glory.<sup>153</sup>

Despite the occasional claim to the opposite from those inside the movement such as Williams (“Charismatic Worship, then, finds its source in the Father, is mediated through the Son, and is empowered and led by the Spirit.”<sup>154</sup>), P-C Worship seems to communicate through its praxis an unmediated form of worship, bypassing the work of Christ. In its concern to offer worship ‘in the Spirit’ it is not locating worship enough as mediated through the Son, to the Father.<sup>155</sup> This issue of Trinitarian conceptualisation is a key concern for constructing a theology of P-C worship. As one critic summarises: “There is... ambiguity as to whether Charismatic worship rests in a Pneumocentric Christology or a Christocentric Pneumatology.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> See Steven. p. 74.

<sup>152</sup> Steven. p. 177f.

<sup>153</sup> Chris E. W. Green, “In Your Presence Is Fullness of Joy’: Experiencing God as Trinity,” in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Worship*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016). p. 188. Green cites Chan’s ‘pneumatic replacement’ as an example of this theology. See, Simon Chan, “The Liturgy as the Work of the Spirit: A Theological Perspective,” in *The Spirit in Worship-Worship in the Spirit*, ed. Theresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009). pp. 41-57.

<sup>154</sup> Williams, “Charismatic Worship”, p. 145. Despite emphasising the leadership and empowerment of the Spirit, Williams stresses the Spirit’s role in glorifying Christ and equipping the church to that same end. Moreover, by glorifying the Son, the Spirit honours the Father, which “keeps Charismatic worship from becoming Unitarian or Binatarian by neglecting one member of the Trinity for another.”

<sup>155</sup> Steven, p. 208.

<sup>156</sup> Against Don Williams’ article: Harold Best ‘A Traditional Worship response to’ p.158 in Basden (ed.), *Exploring The Worship Spectrum*.

Secondly, expectation. The pursuit of experiential encounter with God, by His Spirit, can lead P-C worship to be in danger of colluding with an “over-realised...eschatological vision”<sup>157</sup> of revivalism, an “unrealistic hope”<sup>158</sup> rather than the “givenness of the gospel tradition”<sup>159</sup>. Moreover, this atmosphere of intensity in pursuit of ‘more’ of God can lead to a “spirituality of anxiety” which “leaves the congregation exhausted”.<sup>160</sup>

For Stackhouse, this revival theology which P-C worship incubates is “threatening theologically to the foundation of Christian salvation.”<sup>161</sup> By focusing so much on the experiential reality of the Spirit, it has “severed the link between Pneumatology, Christology and ecclesiology...”.<sup>162</sup> P-C has a fundamental “theological imbalance”<sup>163</sup>.

With its focus on the Spirit and a post-Pentecost world, is Basden correct to argue that P-C worship: “pole-vault[s] over Calvary on the way to Pentecost and ignore[s] the problem of and the solution to sin”?<sup>164</sup> Stackhouse argues precisely this, and that there has already been an eschatological fulfilment of God’s glory in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ that has taken place. P-C worship thus seems to be detached from this history, replacing it with an almost gnostic longing for the ‘more’ of what is to come:

Thus, congregations are pulled away from the traditional locus of Christian worship that is Christological, to worship that is simply efficacious and expressive of what is

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<sup>157</sup> Stackhouse. p. 51.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, p. 59, 50.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, p. 51.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, p. 180.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, p. 51.

<sup>164</sup> Basden, p. 254.

‘not yet’. This can only lead to tiredness and loss of hope, when, perennially, the gospel is sidelined and the revival never arrives.<sup>165</sup>

Is P-C worship thus a Pneumatology without Christology, a worship ‘in the Spirit’ at the neglect of worship ‘in Christ’? What theological foundations could be formed to arrest the fears of critics such as Stackhouse?

Ultimately the charge is that the vivifying and phenomenological aspects of the Spirit’s work have been so emphasised that the key soteriological aspects of the Spirit’s role have been majorly diminished if not forgotten entirely. Ironically, a movement that prides itself in its pneumatocentricity in actuality has a weak or ‘narrow’ Pneumatology:

Authentic Charismatic-Evangelical spirituality requires a Pneumatology that reciprocates with Christology, but in a movement preoccupied with the peculiarities of Spirit manifestation this mutual dependency is severed, leading to a situation where, to use the Irenaeus image of the two hands of God – Christ and the Spirit - the one hand does not know what the other is doing.”<sup>166</sup>

P-C worship is thus seen by some to be a renewal movement “detached from the central doctrines of salvation in Christ.”<sup>167</sup>

This perceived severing of the link between the Spirit and Christ has major consequences for deeper theologies of salvation: “in tying Spirit activity so closely to the notion of immediacy

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<sup>165</sup> Stackhouse, p . 54.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p. 167.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, p. 175.

and to the cause of revival, [P-C worship] has unwittingly weakened the integral place of the Holy Spirit in the *ordo salutis*, and moreover has contributed to the growing immaturity of the movement.”<sup>168</sup>

## **2.7. Personal and corporate communion**

Peter Slade argues that many P-C worship participants are “all but blind to the communal dimensions of the divine encounter present in the congregation’s praise of God”<sup>169</sup> Despite Wimber’s claim to the opposite, does P-C worship thus lack a developed understanding and commitment in praxis to the function of the Spirit in bringing full *koinonia*: personal communion with God as part of corporate communion with God?

In support of such a view, a recent survey by T.H.Luhrmann concluded that P-C worship was deeply individualistic: “[P-C] worship is intensely individual even when everyone sings together...Worship time is understood to be private, personal, a time to commune with God alone while in the presence of others.”<sup>170</sup> If encounter of an ecstatic nature is one of the prime aims and expectations of the worshipper, there is a blurred line between authentic spiritual motivations and consumerist culture where an expectation of exchange of goods is the norm.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p. 167. Stackhouse is using specifically the mid-90’s ‘Toronto blessing’ here as his primary lens for P-C worship experience but it is symptomatic and typical of wider P-C worship as discussed.

<sup>169</sup> Peter Slade, "Lost in Wonder, Love, and Praise: Toward a Sacramental Theology of Congregational Singing," in *Annual Meeting of Theologians of Ohio (TheOh)* (Trinity Lutheran Seminary and Bexley Seabury, Columbus, 2014). p. 7.

<sup>170</sup> Research was done at contemporary Vineyard churches in Chicago and California. See T. M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012). p. 4.

<sup>171</sup> See for example, Stackhouse, p. 45.

Albrecht terms this danger for P-C worship as the temptation to ‘transcendental efficacy’ - sung worship valued for what it leads to (consequence) more than for any inherent meaning.<sup>172</sup> Worship in the P-C tradition can become a means used by the worshipper by which the *effect* of the Spirit is experienced.<sup>173</sup> Pentecostals know this as the ‘harvest’ - that which happens once the other parts of the service, such as the welcome and the sermon, are over. Albrecht identifies this pursuit as a hunger for some form of “transcendental ecstasy”.<sup>174</sup>

Christopher Dube notes this danger too, with P-C worshippers constantly seeking to maintain “an involvement in some form of transcendence, an identifiable event and moment of ecstasy.”<sup>175</sup> He identifies the fine line between true spiritual hunger and addictive tendencies: “The only way to sustain an adequate sense of this tension is to string together as many events of ecstasy as closely together as possible. Essentially, like any other sensational life-style, it is the life of addiction.”<sup>176</sup> The destination of worship can thus become confused (the action of the Spirit upon the congregation) with the object of worship (God himself).<sup>177</sup>

However, to counter such a view, in its very promotion of every member participation P-C worship could be said to encourage (more than other tradition) the importance of the actual community at worship. In contrast to the sacramental priestly role of the more Catholic tradition, individuals in worship are “encouraged and permitted to become present to each other in ways not previously enabled by the tradition.”<sup>178</sup> Each worshipper, through the use of

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<sup>172</sup> Albrecht, *Rites In The Spirit*, p. 43.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, pp. 165-169.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, pp. 185-186.

<sup>175</sup> C Dube, "From Ecstasy to Ecstasis: A Reflection on Prophetic and Pentecostal Ecstasy in the Light of John the Baptizer," *JPT* 11, no. 1 (2002).

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Steven, pp. 194-5.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p. 187.



spiritual gifts such as words of knowledge, prophecy and healing, can be *dispensers of spiritual grace to one another*.

Thus, taking 1 Corinthians 12-14 as a foundation text, P-C worship is a gathering where “each participant is the minister of spiritual gifts, by virtue of their common participation in the Spirit.”<sup>179</sup> Others, such as Guthrie feel the same, “Shared song...is yet another way that this common life becomes a part of lived experience. In song, the church shares not “one bread”... but one voice.”<sup>180</sup> Williams does seem aware of this danger of P-C worship becoming too individualistic and centered on the worshiper rather than God: “True Charismatic worship is not human-centered or emotion-centered.”<sup>181</sup>, and, “the best of Charismatic worship holds the tension between who we are and who God is.”<sup>182</sup>

### **3. Conclusions: opportunities and challenges**

To recap, the heart of this constructive project is the attempt to articulate the central distinguishing feature of P-C worship: personal encounter with the presence of God. It has become clear that this instinctual spirituality, carried by praxis, suffers from a lack of depth in articulation and grammar. We have seen in this chapter how such a weak articulation causes further consequences for both the self-understanding and the critical approach to P-C worship.

More specifically, this chapter has uncovered a number of further elements to explore. Firstly, P-C worship’s conceptualisation of the presence of God as the activity of the Spirit of God.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid, p. 187.

<sup>180</sup> Steven R. Guthrie, *Creator Spirit : The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011). p. 80.

<sup>181</sup> Williams, “Charismatic Worship”, p. 145.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

This 'operative' presence is understood as an experience of the immanence of God – a God who speaks, acts, and works tangibly in and upon the worshippers. Experience is thus the means by which P-C worshippers discern authentic worship and reception of (sacramental) grace.

Secondly, there is a critique that this experience of 'intimacy' is actually a 'false encounter' - a spiritual immediacy detached from notions of traditional sacramental Christology. The Spirit can thus become misunderstood as a replacement for an 'absent' Christ. P-C worship therefore, thirdly, is in danger of not being eschatologically orientated enough, nor soteriologically grounded with its emphasis on continual communion and reception of ongoing Spiritual grace. It can be said to have a posture of continuous *epiclesis* founded on its 'Pneumatology through doxology'.

Fourthly, it can be argued that P-C worship offers a balance to the under-developed Pneumatology in other Western traditions, such as Evangelical worship, by restoring the function of the Third Person of the Trinity to the gathered church. The question emerges as to whether this is achieved however at the cost of reducing the person of the Spirit to a mere substance leading to an 'I-IT' relationship between the worshipper and God. Such an understanding of divine-human relationship in P-C worship would, in turn, threaten to undermine any sense of true human participation.

Fifthly, there are hints of the doctrine of Union with Christ being a key to the divine-human relationship in P-C worship but it is never investigated further with the simpler term 'intimacy' being the central term deployed to articulate this Union. Practitioners seem to often settle for

descriptions of experience such as, ‘God comes down’<sup>183</sup>, which can lead to a strong individualistic, consumerist emphasis in P-C tradition that represents a narrowing of the full concept of *Kononia*. Moreover, worship of the risen Christ is practiced but at the neglect of much awareness of the mediatorial role of his humanity. The emphasis on the work of the Spirit, combined with the minimal emphasis on the humanity of Christ, can lead to a sense in P-C worship of worshippers needing to escape the material in order to become more ‘spiritual’.

More questions thus arise for our project as a consequence of asking the central question of how to articulate the divine-human relationship displayed in praxis. These questions can be grouped as follows. Firstly, questions around Pneumatology: what is the nature and boundaries of the “Pneumatology through doxology” that is distinct to P-C worship? If P-C worship is an emphasis on experiencing the fullness of the life of God by “functionally”<sup>184</sup> restoring the third person of the Trinity to church worship in the Cappadocian tradition, how does the Holy Spirit ‘function’ distinctively in P-C worship? How can the temptation to subtly depersonalise the Spirit be avoided, and what does this emphasis on the freedom and reality of the Holy Spirit mean?

Is the focus on the effect of the Spirit on the congregation – the dynamic work of God in the midst of the people – a dangerous, self-orientated, narcissistic spirituality as feared by some critics? Does such a utilitarian, personal focus lead P-C worship to suffer from “an impoverished sense of participation in *heavenly* worship?”<sup>185</sup> Whilst Steven does recognise that the Spirit ‘empowers’ the worshippers joining in with Christ’s worship of the Father, there is more work to be done in suggesting how this might happen theologically. Is it some kind of

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<sup>183</sup> “As worship ascends, God comes down. He becomes experienced as immanent.” David Pytches, *John Wimber : His Influence and Legacy* (Guildford, Surrey: Eagle, 1998). pp. 142-143.

<sup>184</sup> Williams, “Charismatic Worship”, p. 145.

<sup>185</sup> Stevens, p. 310.

Eastern Orthodox ‘theosis’<sup>186</sup> whereby P-C worship acts as “the gathering together and transformation of matter into spirit”?<sup>187</sup> Does matter become, in a sense, ‘pneumatized’ in P-C worship<sup>188</sup>?

Secondly questions around immanence and transcendence and the extent to which true ‘intimacy’ between God and humankind is possible: there seems a tension in P-C worship between exalting God and yet the belief in his being dynamically present. There is clearly a need to heed Green’s call to: “strive always to discern more theological ways of identifying what happens in God’s coming near to us.”<sup>189</sup> How can a theological frame be created to safely articulate such an extreme notion of intimacy between human and divine whilst retaining the ‘otherness’ and particularity of both parties? How does God ‘come close’ and ‘manifest’ his presence without collapsing into the world?

Moreover, is ‘intimacy’ the best language to use for the central notion of encountering the presence of God in P-C worship? Does such language hint at an intimacy without transcendence, rather than an intimacy held in transcendence? Does P-C worship simply collapse God’s holiness completely into his immanence? There is clearly work to be done on the nature of ‘intimacy’ and the boundaries of human Union with God.

Thirdly, questions around Christology and the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. In its emphasis on praise and exaltation is there a danger that P-C worship obscures the humanity of Christ? Does P-C worship intrinsically encourage (ironically) a view of a separateness

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<sup>186</sup> For discussion of the term see Augustine, “Liturgy, Theosis, and the Renewal of the World”, pp. 168-9.

<sup>187</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, Ioan Ionita, and Robert Barringer, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, Volume 2, the World: Creation and Deification* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005). p. 6.

<sup>188</sup> A phrase used by Daniela Augustine, p. 167 based on the work of Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 1st ed. (London, J. Clarke, 1957).

<sup>189</sup> Green. p. 189.

between worshippers and God, rather than a unity with more focus being on Christ as King rather than Christ as mediator-priest? In particular, by pursuing the vivifying and phenomenological aspects of the Spirit's work, has P-C worship detached itself from central doctrines of salvation in Christ? How does soteriology relate to P-C worship Pneumatology? What resources can be used to frame P-C worship's characteristic epiclesis in a firmly Christological frame?

Is it possible to bring the 'instinctive Trinitarianism' of P-C worship praxis to theological maturity? As Green highlights, the language used by practioners in the P-C worship tradition ('heaven', 'glory', 'power', 'Lord', 'God', 'King'<sup>190</sup>) could be equally used by non-Trinitarian 'Oneness' Pentecostals, as by Trinitarian Charismatic-Anglicans. There is clearly an ambiguity surrounding a deeper articulation and theology of P-C worship – in particular the central unifying distinctive of encounter with the presence of God.<sup>191</sup>

Finally, what are the implications for traditional sacramentology of the emphasis on the community at worship and the grace of the Holy Spirit at work, in and through the believers as a whole, rather than through sacrament?

Having revealed the scope of the constructive work there is to be done on P-C worship theology – both the opportunities and the challenges – we will pick up these themes again in Chapter 8 reading P-C worship through the lens of Calvin's Union with Christ. However, before we enter the Reformed tradition to find a way to creatively construct a robust, prescriptive, theological framework for P-C worship, there is one other approach to forming a theology of P-C worship

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<sup>190</sup> Green, p. 188.

<sup>191</sup> Green equates P-C attempts to articulate encounter with the theology of Schleiermacher: "We experience a unified and unifying presence, a oneness upon which we absolutely depend, and because all primary utterance of God speaks to this unity, Trinitarian talk is of secondary importance and at best marginal benefit." p. 188, fn.3.

that is growing in such significance that it requires its own brief chapter: the sacramental reading.

## Chapter 5: Entering the Enchanted World: the Sacramental Route

### 1. Introduction

At the same time as P-C worship has been prioritising the belief and expectation of personal and corporate experiential encounter with the presence of God, other traditions have been discussing an apparent lack of such presence in worship.

For example, building on Andrew Greeley's analysis of the Catholic tradition which emphasizes the presence of God in the world, whereas the Protestant tradition emphasizes the absence<sup>1</sup>, Hans Boersma argues that Evangelical worship in general is void of any theology for a 'real presence' of Christ. Connection with God is mainly 'external' or 'nominal' not truly what he terms 'participatory' (symptomatic of the modernistic break between the natural realm and the divine life).<sup>2</sup>

From a different perspective but with similar conclusions, John Jefferson Davis has in his sights "the poverty of Evangelical Protestant worship"<sup>3</sup> which he argues in most services is missing a "vivid awareness of God's presence as the central reality in worship"<sup>4</sup>. He argues this especially of 'seeker-driven styles of worship' but, essentially, "the problem of the loss of the awareness of the presence of the Holy God and the risen Christ as the central reality of worship is present to some degree in most Evangelical churches today"<sup>5</sup>. Worshippers in such gatherings are crucially "not fully aware of or expecting the *real presence of the Holy God in*

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*.

<sup>3</sup> Davis, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

*the midst of the assembly.*”<sup>6</sup> Davis concludes strongly that “the fundamental issue is the recovery of the centrality and reality of God in the worship and life of the Evangelical church.”<sup>7</sup>

This longing for more emphasis on a direct experience of God in worship is also present in the UK and is picked up in the work of amongst others, John Colwell:

...[people] may expect to receive a welcome, the warmth of friendship...children’s work and youth work, comfortable seating, engaging preaching – but even the most theologically unaware and undiscerning expect something more profound from or through a church: they expect to be encountered by God.<sup>8</sup>

This apparent lack of an immediate sense of the presence of God in worship is often described using the vocabulary of the sacramental tradition. As we have seen, critics of P-C worship, such as Stackhouse and Colwell, critique P-C worship as having a poverty of true sacramental reality – espousing instead a return to the traditional sacraments as the heart of worship praxis<sup>9</sup>. Anglican Bishops similarly are lamenting worship services which are “devoid of the power of sacramental encounter”<sup>10</sup> and asking for the church to, “recover...[a] love for the sacraments and... belief in them as places of divine encounter”.<sup>11</sup>

Hans Boersma expresses this desire as a longing for the ‘re-enchantment of the world’<sup>12</sup>. A concern to re-connect the world and God; to re-instate theologically an active presence of God

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 39 (emphasis mine)

<sup>7</sup> Davis, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Colwell, p. 257.

<sup>9</sup> Stackhouse, p. 127: sung worship is “non-sacramental”.

<sup>10</sup> L. Urwin, “What is the role of sacramental ministry in fresh expressions of church?”, in S. Croft (ed.), *Mission-shaped Questions*, London: Church House Publishing, 2008, p.32.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Boersma, p. 190.



in the world and the possibility of direct experience of God in worship. It is ironic therefore that here in P-C worship praxis seems a rich example of the kind of human participation in the divine life ('sacramental reality' or 'sacramental ontology' (Boersma)) so longed for.

What is at stake here is a Christian understanding of reality itself – how Creation participates in the very being of God - what has traditionally been termed the discussion of ontology. Davis seems to recognise this: "The church in its worship assemblies needs a fresh manifestation of an *ultimate reality* that can recapture its imagination."<sup>13</sup> This new 'mindset for worship'<sup>14</sup> is about having a "fundamental background theory of the real"<sup>15</sup> .... an "ontological framework...within which worship takes place"<sup>16</sup>. These questions of ontology lie deeper underneath the questions surrounding intimacy and encounter we have already exposed in the previous chapters that need to be addressed.

In summary, P-C worship seems to display in its praxis a rich ontology of participation in divine reality, yet lacks in its theological articulation an explanation for such participation. Meanwhile more traditional sacramental worship seems to offer just such a rich theological articulation of ontological reality. Therefore, a natural move, yet one which has only been taken up in recent years is to anchor P-C worship in sacramental categories; to read P-C worship praxis through the lens of sacramental theology. Both have a shared longing for an 'enchanted world' – a direct experience of the reality of the life of God in the life of the believer. However, such a move, as we shall argue in this chapter, has limited success. Typically for its struggle to account for the specific Spirit-centric emphasis of P-C worship due to the focus on materiality acting in a mediatory capacity in the sacramental encounter. As we shall see, the theology we

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<sup>13</sup> Davis. p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 139.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

construct for P-C worship in dialogue with Calvin's Union with Christ in Part II must be able to expand this emphasis on Creation and Incarnation doctrines with the wider Christian perspective of Ascension and Pentecost narratives.

## **2. The sacramental lens**

Two works which were some of the first, and remain some of the only<sup>17</sup>, detailed studies of the sacramentality of P-C sung worship are my own M.A. (Kings London) thesis of 2008 and Sarah Koenig's piece 'This is My Daily Bread'. Both take different approaches – I will draw on my own here to mainly set up the vocabulary and language of the tradition<sup>18</sup>, whilst I will use Koenig's to illustrate some of the ontological questions that emerge from the marriage of sacramental and P-C approaches to worship. Finally, I will look at Boersma's recent and influential work on 'Heavenly Participation' advocating a 'sacramental ontology' as well as Peter Slade's use of it.

### **2.1. Drake**

My work centred on the crucial theological foundations for the sacramental understandings of encounter and mediation. That is the belief in Created matter acting as a sign of and/or vehicle for divine presence. Such a high theology of the physical and its relationship to spiritual reality is founded on the doctrines of Creation and Incarnation<sup>19</sup> as well as specific scriptures such as

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<sup>17</sup> As we have mentioned already, recently Lester Ruth picked up on this category for his closing chapter of *Loving on Jesus*, alongside Peter Slade's online article which I refer to later in this chapter.

<sup>18</sup> My own work aimed to investigate whether: "the sacramental tradition, with its articulations of presence and theologies of mediation, provides a rich seam from which to gleam a vocabulary and theology for reading and critiquing Charismatic worship." Drake, *Towards A Sacramental Understanding*, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> For discussion of this see for example, Colwell p. 56f. and p. 27 of A. Loades and D. Brown (eds.), *Christ: The Sacramental Word: Incarnation, Sacrament and Poetry*, London: SPCK, 1996. The incarnational focus in

those instituting the sacraments of Communion and Baptism. This central emphasis on physical elements facilitating participation in divine life is in contrast to gnostic dualistic notions of having to escape materiality in order to gain spirituality. Thus, I showed how in sacramental theology, spiritual reality is experienced by involvement in physical realities: the eating of bread, drinking of wine or entering the waters of baptism.<sup>20</sup>

Sacraments therefore function (in the Augustinian tradition) as “visible signs of invisible grace”<sup>21</sup>. Through participating in created matter, the worshipper participates in divine reality. The sacramental event is human experience of the divine event of God in Christ.<sup>22</sup> But how does such an ontology work? How does form (the physical sacramental media) relate to content (the spiritual ‘sacramental’ reality)? Here I used Aquinas’s distinction between ‘instrumental’ (the physicality of the sacrament) and ‘efficient’ causes of grace (God’s agency), to allow for the recognition of the involvement of the physical in mediation whilst upholding the primacy of God’s action<sup>23</sup>.

Having established this foundation, I began to read Charismatic worship through this lens identifying the ‘sacramental media’ of sung worship as threefold: words, music, and together, ‘song’. Using the work of Ann Loades and David Brown<sup>24</sup> (who argue that words can be

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sacramental thinking has led to a move particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century towards seeing Christ himself as the original and ultimate ‘sacrament of God’ or ‘primordial sacrament’. See for example, E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God*, (Maryland: Sheed & Ward, 1963).

<sup>20</sup> “How these two realities relate, and what the precise nature of the divine spiritual reality encountered is, have been a cause for much debate over centuries of theological discussion and polemic.” Drake. p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> See for example R. Thompson, *The Sacraments*, (London: SCM Press, 2006) p. 46. Similarly, Thomas Cranmer famously defined a sacrament in the 1662 book of Common Prayer as: “the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace”, Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer (1662).

<sup>22</sup> See especially on this: E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God*.

<sup>23</sup> “The language of efficiency and instrumentality thus suggests that although God is the ‘first’ and efficient cause of grace (the origin of agency), the physicality of the sacrament itself, and therefore its potentiality to act as a sign, participates in this divine causality, and to some extent is crucial to the successful mediation of, or perhaps better *participation* in the spiritual reality behind the sacrament.” Drake. pp. 18-20.

<sup>24</sup> Loades & Brown, *Christ: The Sacramental Word*; Cf. D. Brown, *God & Mystery in Words*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Cf. S. Wright, “*The Bible as Sacrament*”, (Anvil 19:2:2002), pp. 81-87.

conceived in sacramental terms)<sup>25</sup>, I looked at the role of language in facilitating this sacramental reality for the worshipper. Rather than merely declaring propositional truth, the lyrics of songs act to open up, or appropriate in some way the very spiritual reality they describe.<sup>26</sup> Thus: “Word and flesh should not therefore be seen as opposites (as has often happened in Protestant debate around the role and weighting of the ‘twin ministries’ of Word and Sacrament), but rather as ‘intimately related’<sup>27</sup>

Lyrics in songs therefore point to the reality of the life of God, and in some way facilitate the worshipper’s participation in that reality.<sup>28</sup> Crucially, Stephen Sykes in his article ‘Ritual and the Sacrament of the Word’<sup>29</sup> also argues that the repetition of words causes physical imprint in the brain and body affecting a, “sacramental imprinting upon our consciousness”<sup>30</sup>. Thus, the physical ingestion of divine reality opened up by the repetition of words is comparable with the encounter which happens in the Eucharist: “what has been committed to memory is physically within us, and has become as much part of us as the physical reception of the host at the eucharist. It is indeed the Word made flesh tabernacling among us.”<sup>31</sup>

I then looked at the sacramental medium of music, arguing that it too is a physical medium – from Creation (the strum of a guitar, or hit of a drum) through to reception (sound waves hitting

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<sup>25</sup> Loades & Brown, p. 4; cf. p. 155. Using the opening of John’s gospel.

<sup>26</sup> Drake. p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> Loades and Brown, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> See Drake, pp. 31-35 for further explanations of how this functions. And see Stephen Sykes: “Ritual and the Sacrament of the Word”, in A.Loades & D.Brown (eds.), *Christ: The Sacramental Word: Incarnation, Sacrament and Poetry*, (London: SPCK, 1996), pp. 157-167.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 157.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 159. Cited in Drake, p. 35.

the ear drum of the listener). For this I utilised the work of Steiner, and in particular the outstanding work done on the theology of music by Jeremy Begbie.<sup>32</sup>

The power of music is in its ability to resonate with our own humanity, and not only in a metaphysical way, but a very real physical sense. From the sounds and rhythms an unborn child experiences in the womb through to the ongoing ‘music of the body’<sup>33</sup> produced by heart rate and speech, music is an embodied reality, or as Jeremy Begbie puts it, a ‘bodily business’.<sup>34</sup> Through means of its nature and aspects of its specific form, music thus has an impact on the whole of being, intellect and emotion:

The totality of this effect of music upon the human being and the inability of the human mind to fully identify, conceptualise and explain the impact, allows music an ability to point outside of human experience, to direct attention to the transcendent, to the ‘other’<sup>35</sup>

Finally, bringing these two elements together I looked at the concept of ‘song’ as acting to facilitate a sacramental encounter. Although separately words and music have specific forms that enable each to mediate and present divine presence to worshippers, it is together as ‘song’

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<sup>32</sup> For an introduction to Begbie’s work see the helpful: Jeremy Begbie and Steven R. Guthrie, *Resonant Witness : Conversations between Music and Theology*, The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2011).

<sup>33</sup> T. DeNora, *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 101. Cited in Jeremy Begbie, *Resounding Truth : Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (London: SPCK, 2008), p. 47.

<sup>34</sup> Begbie, p. 47: “Our physical, physiological, and neurological makeup shapes the making and hearing of sound to a high degree.” Cited in Drake, p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> Drake, p. 38 (including citation of Steiner, p. 226 and p.18): “[Music] takes us to the frontiers between conceptualization of a rational-logical sort and other modes of internal experience”. Cf. Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, pp. 298f.

that their capacity is most fully realised. Through both cooperation and juxtaposition their interaction generates “possibilities greater than the sum of each”<sup>36</sup>.

This analysis of the sacramental medium of ‘song’ resulted in the suggestion of a pathway tracing a song’s physical impact and interaction with the human in worship:

Songs thus have the ability to impact, as a sacramental medium the whole person: physically, emotionally and intellectually. Whereas the pathway of influence for words is intellect, emotion and then body; the pathway of music’s influence is reversed: body, emotion, intellect. Separately their impact on the human person is powerful; together it is total.<sup>37</sup>

In summary, my work therefore argued that P-C worship could be read as acting ‘sacramentally’ in that it has “a very real materiality at its core”.<sup>38</sup> Singing together in worship is “a thoroughly embodied action... words and music combine to fuel the imagination, create memory, evoke experience, and aid the performance, reception and inhabitation of God’s narrative (His word), opening up a space for the self-giving of God to his Creation and Creation’s re-orientation of relation back to God in Christ.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Drake, p. 43 (citation from Begbie, *Music, Mystery and Sacrament*, p. 187). Hardy and Ford in their original study of ‘praise’ identified this potential in the coming together of words and music in song: “[music] takes them [words] up into a transformed, heightened expression, yet without at all taking away their ordinary meaning. Language itself is transcended and its delights and power are intensified.” Hardy and Ford, p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Drake, p. 44.

<sup>38</sup> Drake, p. 48.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

This physical participation in spiritual reality rooted on Creation and incarnation doctrines is at the heart of what we shall see Boersma calls the ‘sacramental ontology’. Other writers such as Nicholas Wolterstorff also argue strongly for this foundation to ontology<sup>40</sup>.

My 2008 thesis went on to discuss some practical implications of this sacramental understanding of sung worship<sup>41</sup> but more importantly for this current project is to move on to Sarah Koenig’s paper which came out the same year as mine but with a different approach relying more on liturgical studies analogies.

## **2.2. Koenig**

Koenig wishes to expand the broader church’s existing sacramental theology to include ‘Evangelical praise and worship’ (of which she would see P-C worship as a part). For Koenig, sung worship is a place where, “the church finds God”.<sup>42</sup>

Based on the work of Gordon Lathrop, she utilises the concept of ‘ordo’<sup>43</sup> and applies it to sung worship. Essentially, if the central two elements of Christian worship are ‘word’ and ‘table’, Koenig argues that praise and worship thus takes the place of the ‘Table’ in providing a counter-balance to the Word.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Sacrament as Action, not Presence,” in A. Loades & D. Brown (eds.), *Christ: The Sacramental Word: Incarnation, Sacrament and Poetry*, (London: SPCK, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> Drake, pp. 50-58 and see N. J. Drake, *A Deeper Note: the ‘informal’ theology of contemporary sung worship*, (Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Koenig, p. 160.

<sup>43</sup> Lathrop, *Holy Things*. The ‘ordo’ is a term commandeered to refer to the basic core elements, labelled simply as ‘Word, Table, Bath’ of historic Christian tradition.

<sup>44</sup> Koenig, p. 147.

For Lathrop, the Eucharist is the setting of encounter, invocation, anamnesis, thanksgiving, locality and universality, and charity. But for many evangelicals, the setting which these things happen on a weekly basis is the Praise and Worship time.<sup>45</sup>

Sung worship thus can be said to act ‘sacramentally’ in that it *functions* in the same way the Eucharist does: “Congregation song acts as consecrated bread and wine as it sets the stage for invocation and encounter”.<sup>46</sup> P-C sung worship thus functions sacramentally in connecting the worshipper with the grace of God in Christ.

To substantiate this claim, one would think Koenig would head for a similar approach as my own in arguing for the physicality of sung worship (a core theological component of the sacramental view of participation and ontology). Instead, she only goes as far as arguing that the experience of worshippers in Evangelical worship is a ‘tangible’ one illustrated by the *metaphors* of physical encounter with God used in song lyrics. Such lyrics contain notions of, “seeing, touching, and even tasting the Divine”.<sup>47</sup> One critical reading of her paper picks up on this point: “It is a fundamental error when, in trying to prove that music is embodied, she relies on the *texts* of the songs, thereby making her argument rational and not physical...”<sup>48</sup>

Koenig does go on to draw some interesting conclusions from her analysis of sung worship functioning as the Table in a P-C ordo. Sung worship is a “universal activity”, an “articulation of the universal need for ordered sound”; moreover, the time of Praise and Worship acts as a “meeting point” making “the past occasion to be present reality, and ...future expectation of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 151.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 149.

<sup>48</sup> Stasi, April 25, 2008, <http://feminary.blogspot.co.uk/2008/04/praise-worship-sacrament.html>. p. 2.



salvation history to be present in current space and time.”<sup>49</sup> Whilst her method does not feel sound, there is still interesting fruit from her reading of P-C worship through a sacramental lens.

Although sung worship seems to *function* in a similar way for P-C worship as the Eucharist does for other traditions, Koenig is careful not to go as far as saying sung worship can or should replace the unique, instituted by Christ, ‘Table’<sup>50</sup>. However, Koenig does ask the question of the role of communion in Evangelical worship where sung worship seems to “so aptly fill all of the Eucharist’s duties”.<sup>51</sup> She concludes they are both meaningful symbols that can help deepen each other by juxtaposition much as the rest of Lathrop’s *ordo*.<sup>52</sup>

Koenig’s work does not go far enough in asking *how* sung worship functions as “a kind of Eucharist”<sup>53</sup>? She rightly identifies the emphasis in P-C worship on God’s immediate presence (immanence) which is operative and able to increase or deepen, by the Holy Spirit, through worship<sup>54</sup>, but only gives a limited reading of any deeper questions of how such human participation in divine presence occurs – the question of mediation and ontology.

It is not just the distinctive Evangelical emphasis on a personal salvation event that is a contributing factor to sung worship’s replacement of the Table in the *ordo*, but also the movement’s particular understanding of presence and Pneumatology. Koenig argues that both

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<sup>49</sup> Koenig, p. 152.

<sup>50</sup> “The Eucharist cannot be reduced to a set of utilitarian purposes and then replaced with a liturgical act that better suits a church’s taste.” Ibid, p. 160.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 160.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 160. However, despite insisting that her reading of sung worship acts to expand rather than replace traditional sacramental theology, the conclusions Koenig reaches in reading sung worship as replacing Table in the *ordo* of ‘Evangelical Praise and Worship’ suggests the opposite as a natural conclusion (for example: “It is a new kind of partaking, a new kind of meal.” p. 161.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 160.

<sup>54</sup> See p. 150 for more on this.

sung worship and the Eucharist invoke the Spirit, but the difference lies in the underlying understanding of mediation. For evangelicals, the Spirit isn't restricted to having to come through anything (bread and wine) but has an immanence that allows for direct access or "indwelling" of the worshipper. Any mediating factor would be seen as limitation on God's presence being anywhere.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, there is an emphasis on continuing to be filled with the Spirit beyond any one-off salvation moment. Thus, any invocation during sung worship is not, "a request for the Holy Spirit to come to a place where the Spirit was not previously present, as in the traditional invocation over the bread and wine"<sup>56</sup>. Moreover, there is an expectation of experiencing *evidence* of the Spirit's presence in the singing: "Presence, for the Charismatic Evangelical, is...a matter of activity."<sup>57</sup> This, as we have already referenced, Koenig calls an "operative presence": "the congregation drinks in the presence of the Spirit through song and empowered worship serves as the evidence of and response to the Holy Spirit's work."<sup>58</sup>

Koenig's work offers some useful insights – in particular identifying soteriology and Pneumatology as key areas to work on in forging an understanding of sung worship's emphasis on human experience of divine presence. Soteriologically, she argues that the personal 'salvific moment'<sup>59</sup> is crucial to the worshipper's self-understanding and it is this existential event that is remembered and re-experienced in the present moment through singing. Part of the work of singing, as in the Eucharist, is thus to relate the worshipper *back* towards the work of God in Christ on the cross: "the congregation revisits the paschal event and the event becomes current again as its effects spill over into the present"<sup>60</sup>. Song thus "serves as the bread and the wine"

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 149: "They emphasise the freedom of God to be present where and when God wants to be. This is why Praise and Worship must be described as facilitating encounter with God and not producing or providing encounter with God. Praise and worship is not instrumental in the sense that Eucharist is; encounter is not ensured, but the congregation assembles in faith that God will be present among them"

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 151.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 152.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 152.

and acts with “anamnestic purpose”<sup>61</sup> producing “transformative memory”<sup>62</sup> for Evangelical worshippers.<sup>63</sup>

However, whilst seeing the distinct Pneumatology that is suggested by the praxis of P-C worship, Koenig doesn’t go far enough in suggesting a theology of mediation or ontology of sacramentality which integrates what she observes in P-C worship with the fundamental emphasis on materiality anchored in the foundational doctrines of Creation and incarnation.

A further, more recent example of using the sacramental lens to articulate a framework for reality in regard to worship is the work of Hans Boersma –to which we now return in more detail.

### ***2.3. Boersma: a sacramental ontology***

The centrality of Creation and Incarnation as the traditional foundations for sacramental understandings of divine-human relationship combined with a focus on exploring the human experience of divine presence is crystallised in the work of Hans Boersma. Boersma serves our project as a recent example of a ‘sacramental ontology’ for worship.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 151.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 152.

<sup>63</sup> It is important to note that despite emphasizing the distinctive understanding of the Spirit in Evangelical worship, like other readers we have noted, Koenig tends towards prioritizing the Christ event as the sole location of the God who “acts in the realm of space and time” (p. 151). It is the re-occurrence of this event, almost in a Barthian fashion, that is the power of sung worship for Charismatic evangelicals. This subtle subordinationism denies the Spirit’s freedom as the third person of the Trinity and distinct eschatologically-orientated contribution to the work of the Trinity. God’s action in the world *today* is precisely the work of the Holy Spirit.

Boersma judges that the church is currently suffering the consequences of the separation in modernity of Creator and Creation, leaving a ‘autonomous natural realm’.<sup>64</sup> As we have noted, he longs to establish through his ontology a ‘re-enchantment of the world’. Whilst it feels like Boersma is standing on the shoulders of the Radical Orthodoxy<sup>65</sup> movement in his analysis of history, Boersma himself claims much more influence from the French Catholic movement of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century – the ‘new theology’ of Yves Congar, and de Lubac<sup>66</sup>. Indeed, it is through their lens, in particular their readings of the early Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa, that Boersma’s analysis of the gap between God and the world and his proposal for bridging that gap in worship emerges.

The heart of his analysis is that behind the theology of the early church – from the patristic period through to the medieval period – lay a crucial ‘platonic-christian’ synthesis. This ‘Christianized’-platonic philosophy was lost at the Reformation and cast aside completely in the Enlightenment and the turn to modernity. The result for Christian theology, according to Boersma, was devastating. The principle that material Creation participated in the divine life was broken, and therefore the meaning, significance and telos of matter as mediator of the divine was left unravelled.

Boersma argues we have ended up therefore with a ‘naturalized world’, autonomous and independent. Theology and philosophy have divorced and this is how, “natural realities end up drifting anchorless in the raging waves of history”<sup>67</sup>. Something is now needed desperately to

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<sup>64</sup> Boersma, p. 190.

<sup>65</sup> For example: John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy : A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>66</sup> Smith too suggests a fruitful reading of such authors for questions of ontology in the Radical Orthodoxy tradition - See p. 255, fn. 12 in James K. A. Smith, "The Spirit, Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong's Pneumatological Assist," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>67</sup> Boersma. p. 51.

root the life of the world back in the life of God. What has been lost is the sense that, “created objects (give) a glimpse into eternal mystery”<sup>68</sup>; the worldview that Creation is derived from God and reliant on him. Creation is a window, a mediator to lead us to God’s presence.

In summary, Boersma is calling for a renewed appreciation of the way Creation depends on being connected to the life of God for its present significance and ultimate telos. He argues that this requires a retrieval (he prefers ‘resourcement’) of the sacramental philosophy of the great tradition: “For the great tradition, the only way to make sense of the world was by means of a sacramental ontology...God had graciously provided a sacramental link between his own divine life and the time-bound order of Creation.”<sup>69</sup>

This sacramental ontology needs to be founded on the platonic-christian synthesis philosophy that emerges from re-reading the church fathers and Aquinas<sup>70</sup>. Such a philosophy will provide a return to the belief that: ‘matter was important; in mistreating it, one offended the mystery present within the sacramental, created order.’<sup>71</sup>. Against claims of this being a neo-platonic pantheism he qualifies his proposal by way of the doctrine of analogy (Thomist: *analogia entis*)<sup>72</sup>. Heaven and earth, Creation and Creator should not be confused as, although they are similar (earthly truth, beauty, and love reflecting characteristics of God for example), they are simultaneously infinitely different.

This retrieval of a ‘sacramental tapestry’ that weaves Creator and Creation together is at the heart of Boersma’s project, along with, to some extent, those of the Radical Orthodoxy Camp<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>70</sup> The Thomist element is more emphasized in the Radical Orthodoxy view.

<sup>71</sup> Boersma. p. 52.

<sup>72</sup> See *ibid*, p. 71f.

<sup>73</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 68-82 for more discussion.

He claims that this philosophical understanding of the relationship between God and the world is: “the only faithful way forward – not only theologically but also ecumenically”.<sup>74</sup> Such a sacramental ontology will lead to a reinstatement of the “real presence of God in our earthly, time-space realities”.<sup>75</sup>

Before critiquing this intriguing position, we will briefly look at one final author using the sacramental lens to read sung worship and specifically this sacramental ontology of Boersma.

#### **2.4. Slade**

Basing his article on Boersma’s work, Peter Slade argues for a high view of sung worship as it is a “sacramental practice of the church”.<sup>76</sup> Embedded in its praxis is a “sacramental theology of the real presence of Christ”.<sup>77</sup> Thus, P-C worship is a “liturgical practice that participates in and points to a heavenly reality”.<sup>78</sup> Slade identifies the potential offered by Boersma’s advocacy of the category of ‘participation’ and begins to utilise that for a theological reading of sung worship. In particular, he sees the potential of sung worship recapturing Boersma’s ‘sacramental ontology’ for western Protestantism.<sup>79</sup>

Unfortunately, Slade fails to discuss at all the ‘*how*’ of this participation, merely happily residing in the low fruit that can be easily picked by reading sung worship sacramentally.<sup>80</sup>

Despite opening the door to a discussion of participation as a category and how P-C worship

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 189.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 187. Nuanced by the protection that *analogia entis* brings in preserving, “the infinite transcendence of the mystery that is the triune God himself”.

<sup>76</sup> Slade, p. 1. It is a “sacramental practice in its own right” p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> See also Ruth and Lim.

might function as such, he ironically goes on to treat singing purely as a *sign* pointing to “the song of the Trinity”, the “body of Christ”, and the “song of heaven”.<sup>81</sup> Slade rightly identifies, using Boersma, sung worship as having the potential to restore a sense of the presence of God in Evangelical/’non-sacramental’ worship but entirely, unquestioningly adopts Boersma’s category of ‘sacramental’ ontology and ‘sacramental’ imagination.<sup>82</sup> A creative theology of P-C worship needs to instead question Boersma’s ontology and instead offer an alternative participatory ontology reflecting P-C ‘instinct’.

### **3. Conclusions: deficiencies of the sacramental route**

There is much to be appreciated in the use of the sacramental lens to articulate an ontological framework that accounts for human encounter and participation in the divine life. Boersma’s work, as the most recent and comprehensive example of this approach, shares a lot of emphases with what we have seen of P-C worship praxis. At its heart, it is a project concerned to re-connect the world and God; to re-instate the active presence of God in the world and the possibility of that world participating in God. Boersma wants a world where the real presence of God on earth is accessible; a theological framework to make “present the heavenly reality of God himself”<sup>83</sup>. He wants to reinvigorate the belief that God can be encountered in our churches today: “during the period of the Platonist-Christian synthesis, people had believed that God was at work in the church in a rather direct fashion. God, according to this view, made his active presence felt in the church in a quite immediate way”.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Slade, pp. 3-4.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>83</sup> Boersma, p. 187.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

Boersma is also correct to articulate the consequences of the loss of the connectivity of God and the world in the modern period, and the possibilities of its retrieval: “Participation in heaven changes life on earth: paradoxically, only other-wordliness guarantees proper engagement in this world”.<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, like P-C worship Boersma emphasises the experiential aspects of the worship of God. Although not explicit in his text, experiencing the reality of God, the being of God, through this sacramental ontology, leads logically to such a conclusion. He hints at this in passages such as: “The church fathers and medieval theologians were much less interested in comprehending the truth than in participating in it.”<sup>86</sup> Elsewhere, using the work of Andrew Louth, he writes: “theology is not primarily about words; it is about realities”<sup>87</sup>. This call to be personally *involved* in doing theology, in knowing God, in worship of Him, is a call ostensibly very resonant with what we have seen of the P-C worship tradition. As Slade picks up, both P-C worship and the sacramental theology exemplified by Boersma share a core belief in the ‘enchantment’ of the world as well as the belief that theology is about reality and participating or *experiencing* that reality.

The sacramental approach to articulating P-C worship thus shows there is a wider awareness and desire to emphasise the presence of God in gathered worship, and Creation’s participation in the divine. Boersma is one example of a wider use of the category of the sacramental through which to articulate divine-human relations in worship. However, ultimately the reinstatement of a purely ‘sacramental’ view of the world and sacramental understanding of how humans can participate in the divine in worship, is not fully sufficient. Several weaknesses emerge:

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 154.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, pp. 173-4. Cf. Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery : An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).



1. Such a sacramental ontology is founded on a recovery of Platonic-Christian philosophy rather than the theological platform of the Biblical witness to the life and work of the Trinity in salvation history. The questions of mediation and the place of Trinitarian theology feel underdeveloped and almost at times entirely absent. Ultimately using the sacramental category and pursuing a recovery of a lost philosophy to underpin belief in the direct experience of God on earth is a mistaken endeavour.
2. A Sacramental emphasis such as exemplified by Koenig, Boersma and Slade promotes Creational and incarnational doctrinal perspectives, but fails to adequately integrate any form of pneumatological emphasis, nor holds in tension resurrection, ascension and Pentecostal emphases. The person and role of the Spirit tends to be side-lined and diminished by pursuing philosophical categories. It is not sufficient nor complete to articulate the mechanics of this ‘sacramental ontology’ as Creation being anchored in Christ, the eternal Word. Without the Spirit, the ‘how’ of matter ‘leading us into God’s presence’<sup>88</sup> or ‘mediating’ is left unsatisfactory answered, whilst the opposite could be said to be the challenge for Koenig who fails to see any hope in integrating the P-C worship emphasis on the mediatorial role of the Spirit with the sacramental and Christological emphasis on the physical.
3. Although Boersma claims not to be advocating a panentheism where God is present everywhere in everything, it is hard not to interpret his project in that way as it lacks any specifics apart from the relatively vague *analogia entis* concept about how God and the world stay distinct. If physical matter is key to human participation in divine

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<sup>88</sup> Boersma. p. 9.

life, how do God and the world stay distinct and not collapse into one another? Similar to the criticisms of P-C worship we have already seen, how can such intimacy be accounted for theologically whilst retaining the particularity of both Creator and Creature?

This analysis of the sacramental approach shows that underneath P-C claims for experience of the presence of God and notions of encounter and intimacy, lie deeper questions of ontology and the *how* of human participation in God – the pursuit of a framework for the very reality of Christian worship. To return to where this chapter began, perhaps Davis is right (but in ways unforeseen by his own work) when he states “A new way of *perceiving reality more Christianly* is needed, together with new cognitive skills that needs to be intentionally formed (‘doxological intelligence’) to enable authentic worship”.<sup>89</sup>

We are finally now ready to turn to Calvin and the Reformed tradition as a Christian source for constructing such a theology of worship, a framework for understanding divine-human relationality in P-C worship. Focusing on particular parts of Calvin’s work that are directly relevant to the task I have outlined so far in Part 1 (in particular Calvin’s notion of Union with Christ and participation as read through the lens of Todd Billings and Julie Canlis) I will argue that here in Calvin is the foundation for a far more comprehensive articulation of P-C claims to intimacy and sacramental claims to ‘participation’ – the human experience of the divine life. We will discover a robust Trinitarian, Pneumato-centric, as well as Christo-centric theology of mediation upon which a creative theology for Christian worship can be built and an account and critique for the claims of P-C worship can be given. Here in Calvin, read in dialogue with our uncovered P-C worship tradition, ultimately lies the basis for a different type of ontology

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<sup>89</sup> Davis. p. 14.

for worship. Can P-C Worship find its best expression and clearest articulation in a theological account anchored in Calvin's understanding of Union with Christ by the Spirit - a *Trinitarian participatory ontology*? In turn, can the insights of P-C worship help to re-fund the sacramental category and ontology for the wider tradition?

Ironically, Calvin, for Boersma and other sacramentalists, doesn't fit nicely into the 'sacramental' outlook, nor any future hope of ecumenical unity between Catholic and Evangelical. Calvin is not seen as being part of the great tradition's 'sacramental' outlook due to his apparent watering down of the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist<sup>90</sup>. We will see the potential for the opposite to be true. Calvin does have a very strong sense of the reality of Christ's presence in the believer's life but conceives of it in such a Trinitarian way that it subverts the more narrow 'sacramental' world view and turns out to have far more in common with P-C worship's emphases.

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<sup>90</sup> Boersma. pp. 87-94. [Based on De Lubac's reading of Calvin]

## **Part II**

## Introduction: Calvin, Charismatics, and Commonality

At first glance, nothing perhaps could seem to be more opposite than John Calvin and P-C Worship. A Reformer from nearly half a millenium ago, noted, amongst other things, for his emphasis on teaching scripture, banning harmony in music, and opposition to the ‘enthusiasts’ (“certain giddy men have arisen who, with great haughtiness exalt the teaching office of the Spirit” 1.9.1) does not seem a helpful or natural dialogue partner with P-C spirituality.

Moreover, parts of the Institutes have historically been used to support cessationist views of the work of the Spirit in the modern day church<sup>1</sup>:

...[the] gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles, which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the new preaching of the gospel marvellous forever (4.19.18)<sup>2</sup>

As John Hesselink observes, it can seem ostensibly, that Calvin’s theology acts as proof “that there is...a basic, deep-rooted incompatibility between the Reformed tradition and the

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<sup>1</sup> Such as that of American Presbyterian, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*, (New York: C. Scribner’s, 1918).

<sup>2</sup> Careful reading of 4.19.18 reveals however a more nuanced critique from Calvin of the Roman Catholic claims for the instrumentality of the oil and the spoken sacramental ‘formula’ for the effecting of healing on the sick. It is the confusion of agency, that seems to offend Calvin most. Anointing with oil is not an “instrument of healing, but only a symbol, by which the unschooled in their ignorance might be made aware of the source of such great power, that they might not give the credit for it to the apostles.” (4.19.18). Moreover, in the 1541 Institutes, in the midst of this discussion, Calvin states almost as an aside: “Our Lord of course assists his own at all times, and when required he helps them in their sickness no less now than in the past.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion (1541)*, trans. Robert White, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2014). Chapter 13, p. 682.

Charismatic movement.”<sup>3</sup> However, Calvin has more in common with the P-C movement than first thought in the Pneumatological emphases of his theology.

Some commentators have hinted at this possibility in the past – for example, Hughes Oliphant Old looking at the patristic influences on Reformed worship writes of Calvin’s conviction of God’s active agency in and through worship<sup>4</sup>:

What Calvin has in mind is that God is active in our worship. When we worship God according to his Word, he is at work in the worship of the church. For Calvin the worship of the church is a matter of divine activity rather than human creativity.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, John Leith writing on Calvin’s doctrine of the word of God comments:

The sense of the reality of the Creator and Source of all things, the feeling of the objective presence of God, a sensitivity to the activity of God in life in general and in worship in particular, left an imprint on everything Calvin did or wrote.<sup>6</sup>

Contemporary Worship theologian and Director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship John Witvliet summarises thus: “as Calvin saw it, the weekly assembly of the church for public

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<sup>3</sup> Hesselink, “The Charismatic Movement”, p. 378.

<sup>4</sup> For more specifics on worship practice in Calvin’s 16<sup>th</sup> Century Geneva see the excellent: Karin Maag, *Lifting Hearts to the Lord : Worship with John Calvin in Sixteenth-Century Geneva*, The Church at Worship : Case Studies from Christian History (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016); cf. Robert Kingdon, “Worship in Geneva before and after the Reformation,” in Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet (eds.), *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe : Change and Continuity in Religious Practice*, (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); Karin Maag, *Lifting Hearts to the Lord : Worship with John Calvin in Sixteenth-Century Geneva*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship*, (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975). p. 234.

<sup>6</sup> John Leith, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today,” in Timothy George (ed.), *John Calvin and the Church : A Prism of Reform*, (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1990), p. 208.

worship was no ordinary gathering. It was an event charged with divine activity, an arena in which the divine-human relationship was depicted and enacted.”<sup>7</sup>

In fact, Calvin has been called the “theologian of the Holy Spirit”<sup>8</sup> for his emphasis on the Spirit’s work, particularly in his sacramental and soteriological theology. Out of all the Reformers, Calvin particularly emphasized the role of the Spirit as the agency behind sacramental encounter in worship: “If the Spirit be lacking, the sacraments can accomplish nothing more than the splendour of the sun shining upon blind eyes, or a voice sounding in deaf ears.” (4.14.9) The reality of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross is made real and personally effective for us by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit makes what would otherwise be ‘vain and empty signs’ effective for us (4.17.10). This pneumatological emphasis is “an aspect of Calvin’s theology that has often been overlooked in traditional Calvinism”.<sup>9</sup>

It is not solely Calvin’s emphasis on the role of the Spirit in facilitating sacramental encounter that suggests his work as a significant resource for the P-C tradition. His description of what divine-human communion is - participation in God by Union with the risen Christ - seems to share similarities with that found in the central motif of Charismatic worship.

Union with Christ, “speaks of a relationship of the greatest intimacy”.<sup>10</sup> In Part 2 we now explore if this “Trinitarian paradigm for the divine-human relationship”<sup>11</sup>, gives a grammar

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<sup>7</sup> Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding : Windows into Christian Practice*. p. 146.

<sup>8</sup> See Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia,: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1956). pp. 21-24, 107; cf. Hesselink, p. 379.

<sup>9</sup> Hesselink, p. 379. In Hesselink’s view, “a rationalistic orthodoxy has squelched the dynamism of the Reformer’s faith and theology”.

<sup>10</sup> William B. Evans, *Imputation and Impartation : Union with Christ in American Reformed Theology*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2009). p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Butin, p. 120.

and grounding for P-C worship praxis and provides the pathway to an ontology of Christian worship.



## Chapter 6: Calvin's Doctrine of Participation in God Through Union With Christ: Part 1

### 1. Introduction

This chapter and the following one is concerned to accurately articulate the theology of Calvin's Union with Christ with particular regard to divine-human relationality. Three main questions are to be answered: What is the nature of Union with Christ? How does Union with Christ happen? What does it tell us about a believer's participation in the life of God?

We are not primarily looking at Calvin's doctrine of Union with Christ in the context of past and present debates around Pauline justification<sup>1</sup>. Rather, these chapters are primarily concerned with how Calvin's theology of participation through Union with Christ speaks into questions of divine-human relations, Trinitarian agency and the Christian life of the believer. It is, as Butin names it, Calvin's 'Christian vision'<sup>2</sup> which we are concerned with.

In recent years there has been a reawakening in viewing Union with Christ and participation as a central concept for Calvin's theology.<sup>3</sup> These recent 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century studies have done

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, the debate between Gatiss and Horton around whether forensic justification comes first and is the basis for the Union itself of the believer to Christ: Lee Gatiss, "The Inexhaustible Fountain of All Good Things: Union with Christ in Calvin on Ephesians" *Themelios* 34, no. 2 (2009). pp. 199-200; Michael Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville, KY: Westminster: John Knox, 2007). p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> Butin, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ : Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Milton Keynes ; Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2008); J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Cf. Billings, *Union With Christ*; Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*; Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*; Cornelius P. Venema, "The Twofold Nature of the Gospel in Calvin's Theology: The *Duplex Gratia Dei* and the Interpretation of Calvin's Theology," (Ph.D. dissertation: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1985). This re-discovery of the priority Calvin gave to Union with Christ as a theme in his theology has led some scholars to suggest it as the best 'theological basis' by which to approach all of Calvin's thought. Moreover that it perhaps is the 'central mystery' of Calvin's theology in all others areas: see for example, p. 198 Charles Patree, "Calvin's Central Dogma Again," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, no. 2 (1987).

much to accurately attempt to re-articulate Calvin's conceptualisation of Union with Christ and participating in God. They are, in the best sense, 'theologies of retrieval' and help offer Calvin's notion of participation and Union with Christ as a potential dialogue partner for contemporary theology.

Articulating Calvin's theology of divine-human relations demands journeying to quite some depth and breadth across questions of the nature of God in his triune relations and the nature of humanity and Creation itself. Hence, although bringing in other commentators, we will draw in particular on the work of several of these recent contextually sensitive historical works of retrieval. In particular, we will explore Union with Christ through the primary lenses of two recent scholarly evaluations of Calvin's work: those of Todd Billings and Julie Canlis. There will also be references to primary sources, especially books 3 and 4 of the Institutes, as well as some of Calvin's commentaries and letters<sup>4</sup>.

Billings' work is unique as it is one of the first 'synthetic' works on Calvin's theology of participation<sup>5</sup>. As we have seen, participation in God through Union with Christ has often been recognised as a prominent theme in Calvin's thinking, but has usually been treated as an aside to a focus on other, perhaps more 'headline' doctrines, such as the Trinity, Soteriology, and Sacramental Theology. Yet Billings shows how Calvin's thinking on participation impacts all his other thinking on a far more significant level than has yet been recognised.<sup>6</sup> His project aims to allow Calvin's doctrine of participation to "speak on its own terms"<sup>7</sup>, not only to correct

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<sup>4</sup> "[we must] leave...the *institutes* for the back roads of the commentaries and sermons...a much needed detour lest Calvin's polemics determine all our reading of his theology." Canlis, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> The aim of his work is to "not only clarify the meaning of participation...but [also] to show that it is a weighty concept in [Calvin's] thought" Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 104.

what Billings perceives as misunderstandings of Calvin's work, but also because he sees in it tremendous promise for biblical and systematic theology.<sup>8</sup>

Canlis too argues for an understanding of participation right at the heart of Calvin's theology that has not had enough attention paid to it. In expansion to Billings' exposition of Calvin's theology, Canlis offers the category of 'ascent' as a key lens through which to read Calvin's theology of participation.<sup>9</sup> We shall draw on her augmentations to Billings' readings – especially where it pertains to Pneumatology and ascent.

What will emerge through the detailed investigation of these chapters is that Calvin's understanding of how humans participate in the divine life is fundamentally personal, not philosophical, rooted in the work of the economic Trinity rather than any platonic world-view. It is a theological framework for articulating intimate Union with God, found within a far more sophisticated understanding of God's transcendence than Calvin is often credited for.

It is this Trinitarian frame of divine-human relations, particularly with its Christo-centric and yet strong pneumatological emphasis, that makes Calvin's reading unique. It is a participation that provides a "new kind of relationship between God and humanity."<sup>10</sup> Calvin provides an articulation of that relationship that "has radical implications for our notions of what it means to be human, what it means to be a 'self', and what it means to be in relationship with God and others."<sup>11</sup> It has ramifications on anthropology, soteriology, and sacramentology, speaking into traditional sacramental doctrines of Creation and Incarnation whilst simultaneously drawing

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<sup>8</sup> "Calvin's theology of participation has promise...not just for the misunderstandings that it corrects, but for the biblical and theological themes it illuminates." Ibid, p. 197.

<sup>9</sup> It makes the "best sense of his theology" and "avoids the pitfalls of the word 'participation', a word subject to multiple meanings and misunderstandings." Canlis, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

attention toward the sometimes neglected doctrines of Ascension<sup>12</sup> and Pentecost. We will see how it achieves this all through the lens of the Cross, placing Christ as mediator at the centre, and the Spirit as crucial agent in humanity's participation in Christ's journey through death to ascended life. This understanding of participation and Union with Christ speaks right into the heart of the questions of divine-human relationship that have emerged in our investigation into P-C worship.

Calvin's notion of participation thus funds an intimacy, a Union with God that is both theologically orthodox and yet adventurous, immanent but never local, personal and yet corporate<sup>13</sup>. It provides the foundations for constructing in Chapter 8 a creative contemporary theology for P-C worship. Union with Christ, we shall see, is key for understanding divine-human relations in worship and the mechanics and meaning of human participation in the divine.

## **2. Traditional readings of Calvin: transcendence and the divine-human relationship**

[Calvin's God is] so high and lifted up, so unspeakably holy, and man so utterly unworthy, that no Union between God and man could be thinkable.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> On this theme see the excellent, Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia : On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Participation in Christ is participation in his body – which is both 'mystical' but also practical involving love of neighbour and living a life of gratitude. See Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, p. 20. Union with Christ is "both sacramental and ecclessial" Ibid, p. 196.

<sup>14</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic; the Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511-1553*, Beacon Series in Liberal Religion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960). pp. 46-7.

Traditional readings of Calvin, such as that of Robert Bainton above, have emphasised the transcendent otherness of God – a problematic view for P-C worship with its emphasis on the immanent presence of God. In this traditional reading of Calvin’s work, God is so holy, so righteous, that only in staying separate and above a sinful fallen humanity can redemption occur by a righteousness from the ‘outside’. In this appropriation of Calvin, the fact of God’s self-giving to humanity in his son, Jesus Christ, is clear, but any giving or participation by his Creation, in particular the human, is questionable if not impermissible.

In this tradition of placing such a strong separation between humanity and divinity, Calvin has been viewed by commentators such as Louis Bouyer as holding an “inadequate grasp of divine transcendence”<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, this distinction, indeed separation, between God and humanity has been seen as a central exegetical key for all of Calvin studies<sup>16</sup> - and a negative one at that.<sup>17</sup>

It is not only Calvin’s reading of the divine nature that leads to this perceived conclusion, but also his analysis of the human condition. Inheriting an Augustinian lens, Calvin is said to be misanthropic by articulating the human state as one ‘bound to sin’, (later formularised into the doctrine of ‘total depravity’<sup>18</sup>). In such a condition, humanity is unable to do anything to be

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<sup>15</sup> Louis Bouyer, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, Vol 3 (London,: Burns & Oates, 1969). p. 87 (cited in Canlis, p. 15.)

<sup>16</sup> See for example a classic Calvin reading: Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), pp. 111-13.

<sup>17</sup> Such an interpretation is seen for example in feminist readings of Calvin. Authors such as Anna Case-Winters find Calvin’s God deeply problematic – one who seems to live in utter opposition to the world he created. In such a perspective Calvin’s theology of divine-human relations has nothing of value in it to aid a contemporary understanding of human-human relations. In fact, Calvin is read as championing “divine domination and control”. See, for example: Anna Case-Winters, *God’s Power : Traditional Understandings and Contemporary Challenges*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1990). pp. 64-66.

<sup>18</sup> For a summary and handling of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century ‘TULIP’ anacronym by the ‘new Calvinists’ see J. Todd Billings, "Calvin's Comeback? The Irresistible Reformer," *Christian Century* (2009). pp. 22-25; cf. Kenneth J Stewart, "The Points of Calvinism: Retrospect and Prospect," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 26, no. 2 (2008).

redeemed and thus a ‘forensic’ justification of the human condition by the work of God in Christ on the cross is required (so-called ‘external-nominalism’).

If God is so transcendent in his holiness, and humanity is so tied to sin, then even in redemption (as a kind of ‘forensic’ legal pardon), there can never be any sense of ‘Union’ between Divine and Human. The two parties are not to be united as they are like binary opposites - there exists a kind of dialectic between them.<sup>19</sup> God may well be the ‘fountain of all goodness’ (3.11.9) for Calvin, but the ‘total depravity’ of the human condition leads to the need for the gift of grace from God to be utterly overwhelming.

In the analysis of Natalie Davis, Calvin is thus said to have “a theological suspicion of mutuality and reciprocity in God’s relationship to humanity.”<sup>20</sup> His God may have ‘awesome generosity’<sup>21</sup> as the source of all goodness but there is no space for real participation in the divine-human relationship. Such a one-way relationship between God and the world leads to a particularly unattractive type of passive and anxious anthropology: “Because of this inability to do anything but receive from God, our gratitude is ‘anxious and strenuous labor’ that results from ‘thanklessness’ at the most basic level of our response.”<sup>22</sup>

In recent years this reading of Calvin has been incorporated into a discussion around ‘gift-giving’ in theological-philosophical circles.<sup>23</sup> Calvin’s theology is understood negatively as

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<sup>19</sup> Kilian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967). pp. 229-31, 367-71 in Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), p.114 in Billings, *Calvin*, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen H. Webb, *The Gifting God: A Trinitarian Ethics of Excess* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Webb, p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> See for example: Webb, *The Gifting God*; John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001); Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005); and Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A brief systematic theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

creating an understanding of ‘Gift’ that “evacuates human agency as it claims the receiver”<sup>24</sup>. For example, John Milbank, who is part of the ‘Radical Orthodoxy’ movement, criticizes Calvin for exemplifying the ‘unilateral’ approach to gift-giving in order to distinguish his own ‘reciprocal’ approach.<sup>25</sup> Calvin’s Christian is passive not participatory in Milbank’s reading.<sup>26</sup>

The heart of all of these criticisms is that Calvin puts far too much separation between God and the world in his concern to emphasise the transcendence of God. His emphasis on humanity’s orientation to sin, combined with a rigorous defence of the supreme goodness of God in his essence, results in a strong theology of divine transcendence.

This, so-called, ‘mistaken’ theology held by Calvin is a kind of dualism that inevitably results in problematic soteriology, sacramentology<sup>27</sup> and general theological conceptualization of divine-human relations. Related to this ‘mistaken’ theology of Calvin is the concept of grace solely as justification by imputation – a form of legal, forensic salvation. According to commentators such as Milbank, Calvin’s ‘Christian Vision’ is one of a bleak passive world where human response lacks any real possibility or purpose.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> See *ibid.* p. 7. One example of this is his aversion to Calvin’s notion of ‘imputation’ which is a righteousness given to the human entirely from the outside (*extra nos*). They read this forensic imputation as part of a nominalist metaphysic they claim Calvin adopts in “radical discontinuity” with the (correct) Thomist notion of participation built on a (Catholic) patristic synthesis. See Billings, *Calvin*, p. 9 for more. (Milbank’s reading is that Calvin rediscovers Thomist and patristic participation but undermines it by emphasizing too much the unilateral gift of righteousness from God. See also Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 156-7.

<sup>26</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Graham Ward and Simon Oliver apply this criticism to Calvin’s notion of participation in the Eucharist. They claim Calvin to be ‘nominalist’ in the way he understands the metaphysics of the Eucharist – and once again see his insistence on forensic justification as “typical and indicative of his whole theology” (cited in Billings, p. 11) - a theology that separates God and humanity in an extreme way allowing no real participation. See, Simon Oliver, “The Eucharist before Nature and Culture”, *Modern Theology*, 15 (1999), pp. 331-353; Graham Ward, “The Church as the Erotic Community”, in L. Boeve and L. Leijssen (eds.), *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), pp. 167-204.

<sup>28</sup> See John Milbank, “Alternative Protestantism”, in James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthius (eds.), *Creation, Covenant and Participation: Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), pp. 32-6. For more on the specific criticism from the ‘Gift’ theologians see Billings, *Calvin*, p. 25.

It is not only contemporary Western theologians who have viewed Calvin's understanding of the divine-human relationship in this way. Criticisms from Eastern Orthodox theologians share the same over-arching theme. Billings notes that typically theologians such as Lossky<sup>29</sup> see Calvin as part of a Western soteriology that lacks "the larger sense that salvation is the fulfilment of Creation's purpose."<sup>30</sup> Calvin is seen as a version of Augustinianism which over-exaggerates the separation between God and the world, with a doctrine of the bondage of the will to sin and a lack of any notion of salvation as deification or at least participation in the divine life.<sup>31</sup> From an Eastern perspective therefore, Calvin's theology leads irreducibly to the impossibility of any intimate Union or communion, without compromising divine transcendence.<sup>32</sup> Immanence amongst transcendence is precisely what, for Meyendorff, Calvin fails to embrace, indeed, cannot entertain due to his overly Augustinian framework.

In summary, Calvin's understanding of how God and the world relate has often been read as a fundamentally negative account. There is a significant difference between Creature and Creator. Where there is relationality it is limited to legality. The presence of divine power is a presence that excludes and diminishes all other agencies but God's own; human agency is surrendered to divine agency, and humans become passive recipients of the grace of God transferred. There is no place for participation or reciprocity in God's gift of righteousness to us in Christ. His grace is overwhelming, and thus disempowering. It is an imputation given

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<sup>29</sup> Lossky, *The mystical theology of the Eastern Church*.

<sup>30</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 13. Although note Billings does recognise that Calvin himself is "rarely named" in such critiques but claims Lossky has "an implicit argument against Calvinist theology." See p. 13, fn. 50.

<sup>31</sup> John Meyendorff agrees with this Augustinian influence on Calvin preventing him advocating any participation in the divine life (because he was so "fundamentally dependent upon Western Augustinian problematics", p. 172). See John Meyendorff, "The Significance of the Reformation in the History of Christendom," *The Ecumenical Review* 16, no. 2 (1964). Cf. p. 167: "The gulf between... God and fallen human nature, which was inherited from Augustine, maintained in Thomism, and even widened in the Nominalist Scholasticism of Occam, remained as the common denominator of Western Christianity before and after the Reformation."

<sup>32</sup> "It is clear that no real *participation* in God is possible." Ibid, p.173; cf. p.177: "the life of the Christian in the Church does not participate in God's life."



from the outside to a recipient only able to passively receive it. Moreover, the natural corollary of such a theology is that human particularity is not respected in the necessary onslaught of God's movement towards us and the required removal of sin by the imputed righteousness of God's grace in Christ<sup>33</sup>.

These traditional critiques of Calvin<sup>34</sup> are not the prime concern for this project, but are crucial in laying the context for our discussion of participation. We will see how much of a radical corrective a careful reading of the motif of Union With Christ in Calvin's work brings to our understanding and appropriation of Calvin's view of divine-human relations.

Could these critics such as Milbank, Niesel, and even, as we have seen Boersma, be mistaken in their understanding of what Calvin is doing and saying in his theology of Union with Christ and therefore his notion of participation? For Billings, Calvin offers a distinct notion of participation that engages with previous patristic and medieval theologies of participation<sup>35</sup> but with 'radical recontextualisation'.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Canlis argues that Calvin takes up a known category of 'participation' and refashions it in his own way<sup>37</sup>, reinterpreting platonic

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<sup>33</sup> An example of a further argument supporting this view of Calvin is: B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude : The Eucharist Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). pp. 21-31. For wider systematic theologies of the 'Gift' see for example, John Milbank, *Being Reconciled : Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003). Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005); Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift : Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> For more on Billings specific response to each criticism see Billings, *Calvin*, pp. 190-195.

<sup>35</sup> For more on participation in Greek Philosophy see for example, David L. Balás, *[Metousia Theou] : Man's Participation in God's Perfections According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, *Studia Anselmiana Philosophica Theologica* (Romae: I.B.C. Libreria Herder, 1966). Cf. Different understandings of participation rather than just Platonic: John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. To A.D. 220*, Rev. ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> Which results in a distinct notion of participation that is a "subtle combination of continuity and discontinuity" with past tradition. Billings, *Calvin*, p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Canlis quotes Oberman who notes how Calvin redefines old terms for his own purposes. See p. 252, Heiko Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness: Calvin between Humanism and Reformation," in *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation : Essays in Honor of Charles Trinkaus Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, ed. Charles Edward Trinkaus, et al. (Leiden ; New York: E.J. Brill, 1993). Cited in Canlis, p. 14.

participation “on the anvil of [his] perception of the Trinitarian relations.”<sup>38</sup> It is to this adaptation of the category of ‘participation’ that we must pay attention in our reading of Calvin as it is in its very “accents and corrections”<sup>39</sup> that contemporary P-C worship can benefit.

It is important to note that the source of Calvin’s adaption of ‘participation’ is the very reality of the nature of God himself as revealed in His saving work in the world.<sup>40</sup> Calvin, like Barth after him, starts his theology from the knowledge of the economic activity of God in the world in salvation history. Calvin is keenly focused on the biblical witness as his source of knowledge. He shows little time for philosophical intellections about the ‘immanent trinity’.<sup>41</sup>

Let us then willingly leave to God the knowledge of himself...we shall be ‘leaving it to him’ if we conceive him to be as he reveals himself to us, without enquiring about him elsewhere than from his Word. (1.13.21)

Calvin’s distinct concept of Christian participation (as Union with Christ) can thus be read through closely paying attention to his theology of Creation, redemption and the Christian life:

[Calvin] work[s] out a doctrine of the Christian life that is redolent with participation, founded on [a] conviction that the life, death, resurrection, and ascent of Christ has radically changed the way we relate to God and the world.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Canlis is comparing Irenaeus and Calvin here as both doing similar theological moves but from opposite contexts (see p. 17f. for more). She also uses Irenaeus as a dialogue partner as she argues his reading of participation gives greater clarity to Calvin’s own. For wider discussion of her reasons see pp. 17-24. For both theologians, participation was a key way to understand the relation between the believer and Christ and the subsequent relation of the Christian to the triune life of God.

<sup>39</sup> Canlis, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> Canlis, p. 13; Billings, p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> For more: Canlis, p. 94; cf. Butin, p. 185, and. pp. 39-42, 74.

<sup>42</sup> Canlis, p. 22. For a summary of the debates surrounding Calvin’s prioritizing of the economic Trinity and his associated doctrine of accommodation (in particular whether there is a contradiction in his thought between

The Creator-creature relationship Calvin offers, Canlis argues, is a ‘startling vision of human participation’.<sup>43</sup> It is a move from Platonic participation to personal participation, from philosophical foundations to divinely-revealed roots. It offers, as we shall see in Chapters 8 and 9, the foundations for an ontology, “far beyond a Platonic doctrine of ‘participation in the divine realities’ [a form of which is Boersma’s ‘sacramental ontology’] to one that had to factor in the personal nature of the triune members and transformational communion with them.”<sup>44</sup> It is an ontology built on Calvin’s soteriology.<sup>45</sup>

Calvin thus places divine-human relations in a thoroughgoing Creedal Trinitarian framework. By being in Christ we enjoy sharing in his life in the Triune life of God. The distinction therefore so noted by the traditional readings of Calvin, between divine and human, does not act to *prevent* participation for Calvin, but actually functions, as Canlis puts it, “as one of its necessary ingredients.”<sup>46</sup> The transcendence of God is key for Calvin to create a framework for a theology of immanence.<sup>47</sup> Calvin holds a theology of a transcendent *yet immanent* God.<sup>48</sup> As we shall see, it is Calvin’s Pneumatology which enables both immanence and transcendence in a Trinitarian frame of divine-human relations.

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immanent and economic) see Cumin, *Christ at the Cruc*, pp. 11-118; Butin, p. 57f; Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). p. 46f.

<sup>43</sup> Canlis, p. 230.

<sup>44</sup> Canlis, p. 145

<sup>45</sup> Against Wilhelm Niesel, "Union with Christ," in *Reformed Symbolics* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962). p. 185.

<sup>46</sup> Canlis, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 16: “His jargon emphasized God’s otherness, making it easy to forget that it served a deeper orientation toward the *koinonia* of God and humanity.”

<sup>48</sup> Calvin’s strong emphasis on divine transcendence, Canlis argues, must be read with awareness of the polemical context in which Calvin was writing the Institutes; a context which confused the distinction between God’s gifts and humanity’s abilities: “[we must] leave...the *institutes* for the back roads of the commentaries and sermons...a much needed detour lest Calvin’s polemics determine all our reading of his theology.” Canlis, p. 18. Calvin was defending the transcendence of God against the humanist, overly positive anthropology he perceived to be surrounding him. See *ibid*, p. 230 for more.

Moreover, Calvin uniquely holds together both the necessity of a forensic, free pardon from God in justifying humanity through the cross<sup>49</sup>, alongside a more organic, Spirit-enabled Union with Christ and his righteousness for the believer<sup>50</sup>. This Spirit-empowered life is also a crucial foundation of the ‘second grace’ of sanctification – not merely a movement towards holiness as in later tradition, but a life of love and gratitude lived in Union with Christ by the Spirit to the glory of God.<sup>51</sup> It is in this area of a seemingly ‘substantial’ and yet ‘spiritual’ Union being advocated by Calvin that we shall also see a divergence in Billings and Canlis’ thinking. Here is an opportunity for developing a synthesised and progressive theology of Calvin’s participation.

This is a theology of participation and intimacy that, for Canlis, “has radical implications for our notions of what it means to be human, what it means to be a ‘self’, and what it means to be in relationship with God and others.”<sup>52</sup> It leads to an anthropology, Billings identifies, whereby “the true identity of human beings is in communion and Union with God.”<sup>53</sup> The work of God through the cross and ascension restores this original *telos* and orientation of humanity and enables participation in Christ in the Triune life:

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<sup>49</sup> “We explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favour as righteous men. And we say that it consists of the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.” (3.11.2)

<sup>50</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 15. For more on the debates surrounding the relationship between justification and sanctification in Calvin’s thought see Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, pp. 8-14; cf. Venema, who suggests the inseparability is not so much found in the believer’s Union with Christ but more accurately in the action of the Triune God in history. See Venema, p. 248.

<sup>51</sup> In his more populist work, ‘Union With Christ’, Billings summarises sanctification as “the gift of new life, a new Creation, which manifests itself in Spirit-empowered gratitude.” p. 26; cf. p. 16 of Billings, *Calvin*: “the impartation and infusion of the Spirit, such that the human and her capacities are used through the Spirit.”

<sup>52</sup> Canlis, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 16.

In this way, Calvin's strong account of divine agency enables, rather than undercuts, human agency... Grace fulfils rather than destroys nature, so that believers may 'participate in God', the *telos* of Creation.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, there is the possibility of active intimate participation in the triune life of God. This divine-human relationship is "characterized by intimacy and differentiation, not consubstantiality and functions by agency of the Spirit."<sup>55</sup>

It is this Trinitarian frame of divine-human relations, particularly with its Christo-centric and yet strong Pneumatological emphasis, that makes Calvin's theology so compelling and so rich for underpinning and critiquing contemporary concerns such as those of P-C worship. Right from Creation through to redemption and the eschaton, Calvin sees this potential of human Union with God - an extreme intimacy in divine-human relations.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

### 3. The shape of Union with Christ: Calvin's soteriology

First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. (3.1.1)

#### 3.1. *Biblical foundations*

Calvin's primary source material for his theological outlook is the revealed nature of God as seen in the witness of Scripture. To a certain extent he does deploy philosophical and patristic voices to help apply scripture's witness to the polemical atmosphere in which he wrote (as we shall see later with his use of Aristotle), but Scripture was always his starting point and anchor. In particular the book of Romans was central for Calvin's understanding of participation as Union with Christ and as such is our first port of call in outlining his doctrine of Union with Christ and participation.<sup>56</sup>

The lens of Romans 6 to 8 was an interpretive key for Calvin - the Christian life depicted as one of uniting with Christ in his death and resurrection. Moreover, this narration of Union was held by Paul in the wider context of the theme of adoption in Romans 8.12-17, 26-27: "Whomever...God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption [Rom 8.15]." (3.11.6)

Not only did the theology of adoption lay in the background to Calvin's understanding of Union with Christ but also, as Billings points out, the concept of 'engrafting'. This engrafting is both

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<sup>56</sup> On the book of Romans, Calvin writes, "if we have gained a true understanding of this Epistle, we have an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture" John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, ed. D.W.Torrance & T.F.Torrance, 12 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959-72). Vol 5 Introduction to Romans. For more see Billings, p. 61.

horizontal, into the body of fellow believers as in Rom 11:17-19; but also a more Johannine (John 15:1-11) vertical engrafting into Christ. We will look in more detail at this later but suffice to say Calvin makes no separation between the two. Billings comments: “theologically speaking, being engrafted into Christ and adopted by the Father is necessarily connected with being engrafted into the family of God’s children.”<sup>57</sup>

As we can observe from his commentary, passages such as Romans 6:4-5 were key for Calvin: “the apostle does not simply exhort us here to imitate Christ”. Christ, Calvin writes, is not merely an, “example which it is appropriate for all Christians to follow”. Through baptism, the believer can participate in the grace of God which effects the death of the “depravity of the flesh” and therefore a “resurrection to a better nature within us” (Comm. Rom 6:4-5).<sup>58</sup>

From this biblical witness, Calvin utilized participation as an overarching term bringing together Johannine ‘engrafting’ (John 15), Pauline ‘Union’ (Rom 6) and ‘adoption’ (Rom 8), as well as Petrine deification (2 Peter 1:4) and biblical *koinonia* – communion with Christ himself and his body the church.<sup>59</sup> As Billings observes, by the final 1559 version of the Institutes, “Calvin’s doctrine of participation [is] expanded to an impressive scope....[it] is used with regard to justification, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the Resurrection, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the imago Dei...”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 51, fn. 119. Cf. Institutes 4.1.2-4.

<sup>58</sup> In Billings p.61.

<sup>59</sup> For more on this see Ch.3 of Billings. pp. 68-103. Billings argues that “‘Participation’, like ‘gift’, was not a formal *locus* of doctrine in Calvin’s thought. Yet, participation, along with the biblical images of adoption and engrafting, formed an important nexus of themes in Calvin’s theological programme from the year 1539.” p. 187.

<sup>60</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 101. Billings argues this is why the ‘Gift theologians’ are misreading Calvin – they are taking the Institutes (and usually solely the final 1559 version) as the ‘definitive statement of his theology’ rather than “ignoring the development of the institutes and the significance of Calvin’s other genres and writings”. (pp. 68-69). “Although the Institutes is the ‘sum of religion in all of its parts’, preference for inclusion in the Institutes is given to loci that have come into particular dispute, as well as those that fit with the already established Pauline loci.” p. 78.

### 3.2 The ‘double grace’: justification

This uniting with Christ that is the believer’s participation in God is at root a soteriology that has, at its centre, a notion of grace as a two-part work of God: justification and sanctification.<sup>61</sup>

This is the so-called ‘*duplex gratia*’ received by uniting with Christ in both his death and his resurrection:

Christ was given to us by God’s generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life. (3.11.1)

Justification, for Calvin, seems to be a forensic moment where we are accepted as righteous due to God giving us righteousness in the person of Christ - for example:

Justified by faith is he who...grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith, and clothed in it, appears in God’s sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man.... Therefore, we explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favour as righteousness men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. (3.11.2)

It is a moment where pardon is received and this is distinct (yet not necessarily separate as we shall see) from the transformation that believers undergo in sanctification.

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<sup>61</sup> Billings argues that these are “inseparable but distinguishable” for Calvin. See p.15f.



In order to gain further clarification on this aspect of Union with Christ, it is helpful to look briefly at the debate between Calvin and the Lutheran Pastor, Osiander, around this issue.<sup>62</sup> Osiander insists that justification is the divine nature of God in Christ coming to indwell the believer – what Calvin calls the ‘strange monster’ of ‘essential righteousness’ (3.11.5). In Billings’ summary “justification [for Osiander] does not mean forensic pardon of a sinner by grace, but the possession of Jesus Christ’s divine righteousness by the *infusion* of the divine into the believer.”<sup>63</sup>

Such an infusion of the divine into the human (an attempt to “transfuse the essence of God into men” (3.11.5)) reduces the unique significance of the Cross, the role of Christ’s humanity in suffering and in being resurrected and ascended, and the forgiveness from God announced over a believer. Osiander was thus eventually condemned by not just Calvin but also other Reformers, including his own Lutherans.

Why this is so key in helping a contemporary reader understand Calvin’s unique view of Union with Christ, is that Osiander seemed to hold a similarly high view of human Union with God in Christ (see 3.11.5 paragraph 2): “He says that we are one with Christ. We agree. But we deny that Christ’s essence is mixed with our own.” As we shall see, Calvin is upholding a creedal understanding of God and therefore a radically *Trinitarian* notion of divine-human Union.

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<sup>62</sup> Osiander was a Catholic Priest who became a Lutheran before being rejected for favouring an infusion of righteousness through participation in the divine nature of Christ (a version of Union with Christ) over against Lutheran forensic imputation. Calvin was compared to Osiander by his critics for merging justification and sanctification and thereby endangering the central Reformational doctrine of justification by faith. See 3.11.5-12 for Calvin’s treatment of his view. For more see Julie Canlis, “Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6, no. 2 (2004). Cf. Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, pp. 133f; cf. Billings, *Calvin*, pp. 53-61; cf. Butin, pp. 69-73.

<sup>63</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 57.

Some of Osiander's critics however thought Calvin held a similar soteriology due to his emphasis on the occurring of an indwelling and subsequent participation in the Trinitarian life. Calvin's response reaches a climax in 3.11.9: "If we ask how we have been justified, Paul answers, 'By Christ's obedience' [Rom. 5:19]". Yes, there is an organic, transformational indwelling of the Spirit in sanctification but there is also, he is arguing, a distinguishable more legal justification shape of grace.<sup>64</sup> This free pardon is because Christ, as human, has died on the cross in place of all humanity as the second Adam: "...we are justified in Christ, in so far as he was made an atoning sacrifice for us: something that does not comport with his divine nature." (3.11.9) The first grace occurs not because the believer receives an infusion of the divine nature but through a righteousness given to us due entirely to Christ's death on the Cross.

This righteousness, although imputed and declared upon us, is received in the believer's *Union with Christ*. Justification comes as part of the double movement of grace and, although Calvin is keen to distinguish the two movements of grace, they are one: "these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable." (3.11.6).<sup>65</sup> They are inseparable precisely because for Calvin they are contained *in* the very person of Christ and received through Union with Christ. "you could not grasp this [Christ's righteousness (Justification)] without at the same time grasping sanctification also... Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify." (3.16.1) For Calvin an attempt in any way to split them – living a life of forgiveness but without a life of gratitude and outward love for example - would be to

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<sup>64</sup> Billings feels here (p. 59, fn. 158) that Canlis emphasises the Spirit's role in justification too much, downplaying a sense of legal righteousness *extra nos*. Calvin is clear that the bond of unity with Christ is by the Spirit (as we shall see) but it is also clear here in 3.11.9 that there is a factual declared righteousness purely by the very existence and action of Christ in the flesh on earth (eg, "Paul has established the source of righteousness in the flesh of Christ alone.")

<sup>65</sup> The two are, in Billings' words, 'distinct yet inseparable', p. 28; cf. p. 57. Both aspects of grace are contained in the believer's Union with Christ. See 3.16.1 and 3.3.9.

“rend Christ asunder.” (3.11.6), each element of the double grace is joined by an “everlasting and indissoluble bond” (3.16.1)<sup>66</sup>

This background helps clarify the distinction between Osiander and Calvin and, in particular their respective notions of participation and how justification is applied. Calvin’s notion of Union with Christ is not an ‘infusion’ of the ‘essence’ of God (as per Osiander (3.11.5)), nor is it only a participation in the *divine* nature of Christ, but a Union with the *whole* person of Christ.<sup>67</sup> This is the famous ‘wondrous exchange’:

Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body – in short because he designs to make us one with him. (3.11.10)

Crucially this participation in the divine, with the whole person of Christ, can *only occur* through the agency of the third person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. The ‘secret power of the Spirit’ is the hidden mechanic of this Union between the believer and Christ: “we hold ourselves to be united with Christ by the secret power of the Spirit” (3.11.5). Osiander misses this: “because he does not observe the bond of this unity, he deceives himself.” (3.11.5). We will look in more detail at this aspect of the Osiander debate in the following chapter.

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<sup>66</sup> This commitment to holding both polarities of the *duplex gratia* in tension was a commitment to faithfulness to the biblical witness on Calvin’s part but also a correction against late medieval Catholicism. In this tradition, the believers’ assurance of forgiveness had become dependent on continuing in good works – i.e., sanctification and justification had merged in a united confusion. See Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation : The Shape of Late Medieval Thought*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981). pp.131-133). For Calvin, a distinct pardon in the first movement of justification meant freedom for the believer to participate *as adopted children* in a life of gratitude and love (sanctification). See. 3.19.4-5

<sup>67</sup> See 3.11.8.

For Calvin, the wondrous exchange whereby we received justification and sanctification is therefore always *in Christ through the Spirit*. As in the Chalcedonian formulation, this is a Union without confusion of *essence*. Creator and Creature unite whilst each staying distinct. Looking outside of the Institutes, Calvin's commentary on 2 Peter 1:4 makes this preservation of divine and human nature clear: we will not "pass over into the nature of God" and God will not "swallow up our nature" even as we "shall be partakers of divine and blessed immortality and glory, so as to be as it were one with God".<sup>68</sup> We can see through these detailed debates therefore more of the specifics of the shape of Calvin's understanding of Union with Christ: the double nature of grace as justification and sanctification - distinct yet united, and both found through Union with Christ.

Billings neither wants Calvin's understanding of the double grace to be classified as purely legal nor purely organic. He argues that Calvin is at pains to hold in tension both the 'legal' 'gift' of grace in justification *and* the 'anti-legal' more organic idea of sanctification through Union with Christ by the Spirit (as we shall see Canlis emphasises<sup>69</sup>). He argues that "the first grace of free pardon provides the indispensable context for the second."<sup>70</sup>

However, the traditional legal view of justification is far too reductionist in that it forgets the inseparable (yet distinct) fundamental nature of the double grace: justification being the doorway into sanctification. By placing the reception of the double grace in the larger context of the believer's Union with Christ both aspects of the double grace can be held in tension. It is Christ himself whom we encounter in the double grace – both are found in him and in that

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<sup>68</sup> Comm. 2 Peter 1:4.

<sup>69</sup> He argues Canlis is in the 'anti-legal' camp, mistakenly under-emphasising the forensic justification in her pursuit of articulating Calvin's Spirit-participation motif. See Billings, *Calvin*, p. 106.

<sup>70</sup> Billings, p. 107.

context, Billings argues, the ‘courtroom’ ultimately is a far too small and impersonal place to locate this *personal* grace<sup>71</sup>.

Union with Christ is ultimately, as we shall go on to see, a participation in the life of the very Trinity (3.11.5 “the Father and the Spirit are in Christ, and even as the fullness of deity dwells in him [Col 2:9], so in him we possess the whole of deity”). Moreover, the double grace is the doorway to adoption; Union with Christ by the Spirit is the means by which the door opens. In this context, it is clear to see why Billings argues that for Calvin “to separate justification from sanctification would be to accept the legal status of being God’s child but to refuse to move to God’s house.”<sup>72</sup>

### ***3.3 Sanctification and human participation***

As we have seen, both elements of the double grace (*duplex gratia*) are so contained in Christ that Calvin can say we receive justification “not without works’ even though it is ‘not *through* works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness” (3.16.1)<sup>73</sup>. Moreover, “as Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable – namely, righteousness and sanctification...if the brightness of the sun cannot be separated from its heat, shall we therefore say that the earth is warmed by its light, or lighted by its heat?” (3.11.6)

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<sup>71</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 114, fn. 33.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p. 28.

<sup>73</sup> *In ibid*, p. 107.

Thus, there may well be a passive reception moment of righteousness *through faith*<sup>74</sup> when the believer unites to Christ (“having admitted that faith and good works must cleave together, we still lodge justification in faith, not in works.” (3.16.1)) but the evidence of doing good works, of sanctification in the life of the believer, is an essential manifestation of the double grace: “Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify” (3.16.1).

Sanctification then, as part of the double grace received in Union with Christ, intrinsically involves an *active believer* participating in their growth as an adopted child of God (“Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption [Rom 8.15]” (3.11.6)). Union with Christ thus involves *active* participation by the believer.<sup>75</sup>

This active participation through good works acts to strengthen faith (3.14.18). Works are not a ‘help towards salvation’ but rather act as signs of God at work within the believer. Good works (sanctification) are proof that “the Spirit of adoption has been given to us [cf. Romans 8.15]” (3.14.18) which, as we know, means the double grace found in Union with Christ. They are also signs of the believer’s response to forgiveness received (justification) *extra nos*. Billings summarises:

Believers act in response to God’s justifying act in a way that incorporates them into a Trinitarian soteriology: the Father is revealed as gracious and generous through his free pardon of believers in their Union with Christ; this Union also involves the

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<sup>74</sup> In that there is “an imputation of righteousness which must be simply received and recognized in prayer, not achieved.” Billings, *Calvin*, p. 114.

<sup>75</sup> This is against the view of the ‘gift theologians’ for example who see a very passive role for humanity in Calvin’s soteriology. See *ibid*, pp. 3-14.

activation of believers by the Spirit – toward a life of piety and love, requiring ascetic effort and activity.<sup>76</sup>

We can see this active participation reflected in Calvin’s theology of prayer: “whoever engages in prayer should apply to it his faculties and efforts” (3.20.5). If the believer finds it hard to concentrate in prayer Calvin encourages them to ‘strenuously...labour after it.’ (3.20.5) Similarly, with baptism there is a strong sense of journeying and progression in holiness post baptism – the believer is “still on the way” making... “good progress...until they reach their destination, that is, the final death of their flesh” (4.15.11).<sup>77</sup>

The second grace of sanctification is thus the believer “living out the implications of this first grace in a Trinitarian context of adoption.”<sup>78</sup> It involves ‘struggle’, ‘courage’, ‘striving’ and ‘efforts’ – sanctification through Union with Christ is something to “pursue day by day” (4.15.11).<sup>79</sup> Billings writes:

Although believers are dependent on the Spirit for any good ‘gifts’ manifested through his person, this does not mean that they simply wait for the Spirit to act. In speaking of prayer, Calvin repeatedly admonishes believers not to passively ‘wait’ for the Spirit in a way that could cultivate laziness.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 106.

<sup>77</sup> Billings: “While Calvin gives a strong account of divine agency in the sacrament, he is clear that the second grace does not preclude ascetic struggle”. p. 123.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 115.

<sup>79</sup> Engaging in prayer and partaking in the sacraments are, Billings argues, ‘acts of gratitude’. They fundamentally derive from God and come to us as gifts but nevertheless they are *participatory*: “they flow in and through the active lives of believers.” By being active and exerting effort in prayer, for example, believers “actively move toward the purpose of Creation and redemption: to live in loving fellowship with each other, united to God.” (p. 142).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 115.

Receiving the Spirit thus “activates our capacities”<sup>81</sup>. Again, Billings here draws our attention to the way Calvin links the believer’s participation in God with Christ’s own: “As we see in Jesus Christ, true humanity (in harmony with God) is active humanity – actively obedient to the Father, active in loving God and neighbour.”<sup>82</sup>

Sanctification is thus a life lived, assured of free pardon (justification) and now activated by the Spirit. It is a life anchored on forgiveness from the Father, re-generated by reception of the righteousness of Christ, and built up by the work of the Spirit bringing the nourishment of Christ to the believer. All of this occurs in being united to Christ by the Spirit.

### **3.4 Conclusions**

In summary, the shape of the Union with Christ that Calvin espouses is one of *duplex gratia* or ‘double grace’. It is a soteriology that holds together (in the two-fold movement of justification and sanctification) both the forensic and the organic, the death and the resurrection of Christ, the cross and Pentecost, Christ and the Spirit. There is both a free pardon delivered from outside of the believer (*‘extra nos’*) due to the obedience of Christ in the flesh and a transformational ongoing activation by the Spirit within the believer. Crucially *both* of these aspects of grace occur by Union with Christ which can only occur by and through the Spirit. (“The Spirit alone causes us to possess Christ completely and have him dwelling in us.” 4.17.12). Evans summarises, “both justification and sanctification are subsumed under a more

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 46 and p. 106: The Spirit-activated life of being united to Christ is one characterized by gratitude expressed in “a life of piety and love... [and being] active in the ecclesial and social community.” It is only by the Spirit, in fact, that true gratitude can flourish.



comprehensive reality – Union with Christ”<sup>83</sup>, although ‘forensic’, justification is not therefore impersonal *per se* but rather part of the believer’s engrafting into the *person* of Christ.<sup>84</sup>

This is a soteriology that maintains the centrality of the Cross and the human nature of Christ, dying as representative and substitute for all humanity, providing a righteousness that could only come from outside, a forgiveness that arrives *for* us and *to* the believer, whilst also inviting a profound ongoing participation in the whole person of Christ by the Spirit in the transformational life of the Trinity.

Such participation in God is all in the context of adoption (“God has received us, once and for all, into his family, to hold us not only as servants but as sons.” 4.17.1) Participation is thus both *becoming* part of God’s family and *growing* in one’s new identity and behaviour as a child of God. It is therefore a one-off ‘legal’ moment (justification) *and* simultaneously yet distinctly an ongoing life-time (as it is eschatologically orientated) of moments of being ‘nourished’ by the Father through Christ by the Spirit.

Union with Christ is thus a thoroughgoing Trinitarian soteriology. In its shape of the *duplex gratia* it holds together both uniquely divine agency (the work of God in Christ on the cross) and human agency in responding in gratitude and growing in sanctification, both of which are wrapped together inseparably in the container of a Spirit-enabled Union - the key to human participation in divine life.

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<sup>83</sup> Evans, p. 39.

<sup>84</sup> See Billings, p. 27. For background on these distinctions between ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’ justification see: G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Justification* (Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1954). pp. 15-16. For discussion surrounding both sides of the perspective from various scholars on this see: Evans, pp. 9-11.

This understanding of divine-human relations, founded on the premise of the mercy of God the Father to adopt fallen humanity, relies on a high Pneumatology yet is also thoroughly Christocentric. It is to the latter we now look in more detail before moving to look at the Pneumatological aspects of Calvin's participation.

#### **4. Christological basis**

Calvin's focus on Union with Christ places the work and person of Christ as foundational to human participation in the divine. There are two key components of Christology that such a focus yields: Mediation, and the motif of Ascent – the journey of Christ's own response.

##### **4.1. Mediation**

What comparison is there between a creature and the Creator, without the  
interposition of a Mediator?<sup>85</sup>

Calvin's emphasis on the transcendence of God and the orthodox (patristic) theological understanding of the separation between God and Creation is harnessed to make clear the need for a mediator in whom we have communion by means of Trinitarian participation. Canlis argues it is this very emphasis on the otherness of God that Calvin uses to more sharply present the central role of Christ as the eternal mediator without whom communion cannot occur: "What is rarely seen is that Calvin's genius is not in his separation of divine and human but in the way he distinguishes them in order to relate them properly."<sup>86</sup> There is no 'natural harmony' between Creation and Creator in Calvin's work, Canlis argues, "but a unique 'communion

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<sup>85</sup> Comm. on Ephesians 1:10. Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*.

<sup>86</sup> Canlis, p. 62.

motif” marked by presence and otherness.”<sup>87</sup> Indeed, “God’s transcendence is not God’s imprisonment over (and thus out of) the world, but rather his freedom to be present to the world.”<sup>88</sup>

This communion motif is utterly and exclusively Christ-centered in that there is no other way to commune with God: “Surely, after the fall of the first man no knowledge of God apart from the Mediator has had power unto salvation” (2.6.1). Calvin writes in his interactions with the Italian Reformer, Stancaro over this issue: “It is the proper function of the mediator to unite us to God.”<sup>89</sup> Thus, there is no general ontological participation or platonic participation of matter in the divine. Participation, for Calvin, is completely person-centered. Communion with God is always “Mediation-Union”<sup>90</sup> – there is no other way for humanity and the Triune God to have communion.

Moreover, this possibility of human communion with God in Christ, the mediator, is from the foundation of the world not purely from the Cross. In his correspondence with Stancaro, Calvin states:

The name of the mediator suits Christ, not only by the fact that he put on flesh, or that he took on the office of reconciling the human race to God, but from the beginning of Creation he already truly was mediator...<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>89</sup> Joseph N. Tylenda, "The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaro," *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1972). p. 148.

<sup>90</sup> Canlis, p. 57.

<sup>91</sup> *CO* 9:338. For commentary see Cumin, p. 105. Cf. Edward David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology. The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966). p. 70f. Cf. Joseph N. Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator: Calvin Versus Stancaro," *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (1972).

A central component of Calvin's theological basis for participation is this mediatory role of Christ, and the inseparable connection he makes between mediation in Creation and redemption in the opening book of his 1559 Institutes. God, Calvin argues, has placed communion right at the very heart of Creation: "the original adoption of the chosen people depended upon the Mediator's grace." (2.6.2).<sup>92</sup> Calvin scholar, Tylenda, summarises:

From the beginning of Creation he already truly was mediator, for he always was the head of the Church, had primacy over the angels, and was the firstborn of every creature.<sup>93</sup>

In Paul Cumin's excellent study of mediation, he summarises Calvin's move as: "Calvin began by rejecting the idea that the incarnation was necessary for mediation at all...the mediatorial activity of the Son is something God does primarily as Creator and not simply something he does subsequently as Redeemer. For Calvin, mediation is not an effect of the incarnation, but vice versa."<sup>94</sup> Christ is the mediator "to the whole world".<sup>95</sup>

The purpose of this doctrine of Christ's eternal mediation is, comments Canlis, "to build communion into the structure of things."<sup>96</sup> It is the very way the triune God has created from the start: "He has not structured a universe in which life, grace, and 'benefits' can be had apart

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<sup>92</sup> For the potential problems associated with this notion of eternal mediation see, for example, Peter Wyatt, *Jesus Christ and Creation : In the Theology of John Calvin*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Allison Park, Pa.: Pickwick Publications, 1996).

<sup>93</sup> Tylenda, "Christ the Mediator: Calvin Versus Stancaro.", p. 12. Cf. "Certainly, the eternal logos was already mediator from the beginning." p. 147, "The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaro."

<sup>94</sup> Cumin, p. 105. Cf. Willis, p. 70: "As a reconciler, the Mediator was ordained because of the Fall to restore the broken relationship between God and man. As sustainer, the Mediator always was the way Creation was preserved and ordered." Willis. Cf. *Institutes* 2.12.1 – even a sinless humanity would have needed Christ as Mediator.

<sup>95</sup> Comm. on Colossians 1:17. Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*.

<sup>96</sup> Canlis, p. 57.

from him [Christ].”<sup>97</sup> Christ’s mediation is thus eternal, having two functions: reconciliation and sustenance.<sup>98</sup> “When John says that life was in him, he indicates the mode of communication from which otherwise the hidden source, the grace of God flowed to men.”<sup>99</sup>

The Son is therefore, in Canlis’ language, “at the heart of the world”<sup>100</sup>. Similarly, Cumin comments, the eternal Son, “is not just a rescue effort, he is somehow integral to the way God relates to Creation.”<sup>101</sup> He is the mediator of the Father’s sustaining presence in the world. God’s Word is the “life energy...[that]...quickens the souls of all to whom God grants participation in it” (2.10.7).

Crucially, Canlis notes, this participation is not limited to soteriological concerns, but “introduces an intimacy between Creator and Creation in that a *person* – the Mediator – has bound himself to the ongoing life of the world.”<sup>102</sup> For Calvin, in his doctrine of Creation, we have no other access to the life of God, which maintains and sustains our very life, but through Christ himself: “For he who seeks to be loved by God without the Mediator gets embrangled in a labyrinth in which he will find neither the right path nor the way out.” (Comm. John 15:9).<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Tylenda, “The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin’s Second Reply to Stancaro.”, p. 147.

<sup>100</sup> Canlis, p. 59.

<sup>101</sup> Cumin, p. 107.

<sup>102</sup> Canlis, p. 59.

<sup>103</sup> Comm. John 15:9. Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries*. For discussion of the theological tensions inherent in this position around Christ’s consubstantiality with the Father and questions around subordinationism see Cumin, pp. 96-127; Cf. Butin, pp. 55-61.

Participation, as a theology, has thus been firmly planted by Calvin in a specific ‘in Christ’ rather than a more general ‘in God’. His view of the relationship between God and humanity is Trinitarian from the outset<sup>104</sup>.

Communion with God in Christ is moreover not only for Calvin the ‘groundwork’ of Creation but also the “purpose of anthropology, and the *telos* toward which all Creation strains.”<sup>105</sup> The purpose and fulfilment of creatures is found in keeping close to God, in Christ.<sup>106</sup> This occurs through participation in Christ’s journey of descent to the cross and post-resurrection ascension. It is to this we now turn.

#### **4.2. Ascent**

In his commentary on Christ’s Ascension in Acts 1, Calvin declares the doctrine of Ascension to be “one of the chiefest points of our faith”<sup>107</sup> because “from the Ascension our faith receives many benefits” (2.16.14). It is so important for Calvin that he asks rhetorically and seemingly exasperatedly: “Why do we repeat the word ‘ascension’ so often?”! (4.17.27).<sup>108</sup> It is an important motif to look at for us as it further clarifies the shape of Union with Christ and describes in more detail the theological *how* of participation for Calvin – its Trinitarian nature.

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<sup>104</sup> In 3.14.21, Calvin distinguishes Trinitarian relations as efficient cause (Father), material cause (Son), and instrumental cause (Spirit); and in 4.15.6 as cause, matter, and effect. The Father “sustains, nourishes, and cares for everything he has made” (1.16.1), he is not only Creator but “everlasting Governor and Preserver” (1.16.1) constantly involved “watchful, effective, active...engaged in ceaseless activity.” (1.16.3): “To make God a momentary Creator, who once for all finished his work, would be cold and barren...we see the presence of divine power shining as much in the continuing state of the universe as in its inception.” (1.16.1)

<sup>105</sup> Canlis, p. 54.

<sup>106</sup> See Calvin’s commentary on Eph. 1:10: “The proper condition of creatures is to keep close to God.”

<sup>107</sup> Comm. Acts 1:9. Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries*.

<sup>108</sup> Although it has not always been popular for Calvin scholars. Canlis writes: “while the opposition of Calvin to ascent is generally rejected as untenable, there has been little further research to explore Calvin’s use of ascent and, more significantly, its relation to his doctrine of participation.” p. 46. For a rare recent example of paying attention to it see: John D. Witvliet, “Sursum Corda: Images and Themes in John Calvin’s Theology of Liturgy,” in *Worship Seeking Understanding : Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003).

Writing on the Lord's supper in 4.17.2, Calvin states: "becoming Son of man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us." Ascension for Calvin is, Canlis observes the 'decisive and final action of Jesus'<sup>109</sup>. Through God's descent in Christ in the incarnation, through the event of the cross, the way is open for human ascent and participation in the life of God as children of God. Ascension is what happens to humanity as it unites with Christ in his post-resurrection state:

Ascension follows resurrection: hence if we are members of Christ we must ascend into Heaven, because He, on being raised up from the dead was received up into Heaven that He might draw us with Him. (Comm. Col 3.1).<sup>110</sup>

Believers ascend because Christ himself has been raised up and incorporates his followers into his ascent. Indeed, the participation of humanity in Christ's ascent is part of the very reason for God's descent to us: "for this reason Christ descended to us, to bear us up to the Father, and at the same time to bear us up to himself, insomuch as he is one with the Father." (1.13.26).

Looking at Calvin's earliest treatise, *Psychopannychia*<sup>111</sup>, Canlis argues that by synthesizing the motifs of ascent and descent and placing such movements in the overarching narrative of God's interaction with humanity, Calvin further avoids any Platonic pantheistic notion of matter participating in that which it is like (God), the finite in the infinite. Calvin avoids any notion of ascent as Platonic escapism from the world, but instead reframes it as a "directive toward God and Union with him"<sup>112</sup> Ascent is not merely a spiritual metaphor but human

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<sup>109</sup> Canlis, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>111</sup> Calvin, *T&T* 3.413-90.

<sup>112</sup> Canlis, p. 46.

participation in the divine life which is rooted in the secure grounds of the work of the Triune God in the world.

Calvin therefore also redeems the category of ascent from medieval mysticism by means of highlighting its thoroughly Christological and biblical foundations. Ascent is not primarily of the individual soul but “humanity’s participation in the triune communion” which has been made possible through the historical ascent of Jesus.<sup>113</sup> Christ is the “beginning, middle, and end” (Calvin’s commentary on Col 1:12 (1548))<sup>114</sup> of the soul’s ascent.<sup>115</sup> “For Calvin, the ladder is Christ...our ascent is profoundly bound up in Christ’s ascension, by our participation in his ascent.”<sup>116</sup>

Human participation in the divine (understood as ‘ascent’) can thus only occur precisely because God has already descended to us, in Christ.<sup>117</sup> As Canlis puts it: “Even as ascent is ‘natural’ to humanity (in that communion is God’s Creation-purpose for us), it is also profoundly ‘unnatural’”<sup>118</sup> Our participation in God has to begin at the Cross: “His participation in our descent is the sole basis of human participation in his ascent”.<sup>119</sup> This first descending move is the grounds for our ascension as we rise with Christ: “The entire Christian

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<sup>113</sup> Canlis, p. 230.

<sup>114</sup> Canlis argues this writing, some 20 years after *Psychopannychia*, throws off any platonic talk of the ‘threefold path of ascent’ from Calvin’s earlier work. See pp. 49-50 for discussion.

<sup>115</sup> “Calvin did not negate the language of the upward vector and the Christian’s ascending call to greater heights of *unio cum Christo*...He simply restructured the ‘ladder to heaven’ on quite another foundation.” Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>117</sup> There is thus no ‘mystical’ ascent of the soul, or escape from Creation, according to Thomist notions of a human capacity to ascend due to some kind of ‘created grace’ in the soul (see Canlis’ discussion on Aquinas pp. 37-42. “In Aquinas and Calvin we have two different models of participation: one is based on substantialist ontology, the other on election. One is a return to an original unitive state; the other involves communion with a person.” p. 44.) It is a participation, as we shall see, made possible only in Christ’s own response.

<sup>118</sup> Canlis, p. 93.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.



life is an outworking of this ascent – the appropriate response to God’s descent to us – that has already taken place in Christ.”<sup>120</sup> As Canlis summarises:

It is Jesus’ ascent back to the Father into which humanity is included and which completes the economic mission of the second person of the Trinity. Ascent thus becomes the metaphor that governs the entire Christian life – a life marked by a ‘return’ to God and inclusion in the triune life of love.<sup>121</sup>

The cross then is the nexus of this descent and ascent journey. Our ascent with Christ back to God is not because we are somehow like him, but *despite* our very alterity from God. The crucifixion transforms our sin-bound condition into a God-bound orientation:

This is the wonderful exchange which, out of his measureless benevolence, he has made with us; that becoming Son of man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us; that by taking on our mortality, he has conferred his immortality upon us; that, accepting our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; that, receiving our poverty unto himself, he has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself...he has clothed us with his righteousness. (4.17.2)

Thus, the particularity of God’s ‘descent’ in Christ is key for Calvin as it provides the foundations for his theology of human participation in the divine. Calvin has no need for philosophical scaffolding as God has come in Christ, first to participate in our humanity before

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<sup>120</sup> Canlis, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> Canlis, p. 93.

we then participate *through* his humanity. Calvin saw it as crucial that the risen ascended Christ remained in *human* form in some way in his ascension. (See 4.17.29)<sup>122</sup>: “Christ did not ascend to heaven in a private capacity” (Comm. John 14.2) but rather “we have an entrance to heaven in common with him” (Comm. John 3.13). It is the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost that means all of humanity can enter into this one man’s history.<sup>123</sup>

The doctrine of ascension thus ensures an understanding of divine-human relations that has human participation in Christ’s own response to the Father at its core. Ascension is thus clearly not the fulfilment of a latent potential within humanity but only made possible by Christ’s own life, death and ascension: “The situation would surely have been hopeless had the very majesty of God not descended to us, since it was not in our power to ascend to him” (2.12.1).<sup>124</sup> There is nothing in humanity to affect our own ascent to God.<sup>125</sup>

Calvin even goes so far as suggesting Christ’s mission is incomplete if humanity doesn’t ascend back with him to the Father.<sup>126</sup> Incarnation and crucifixion are axiomatic but not the full story.<sup>127</sup> “Ascent is neither the lone journey of Jesus nor the abstracted elevation of the soul, but is the future for an embodied humanity that is co-present with Jesus and his Father.”<sup>128</sup> For Calvin, this radical understanding of divine-human relations means that “the Christian life is not response *to* God but inclusion *in* God.”<sup>129</sup> God is indeed transcendent and other than us in his divine being, yet, we are able to ascend into his Triune life through Union with Christ by

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<sup>122</sup> See George Hunsinger, “The Bread that We Break: Toward a Chalcedonian Resolution of the Eucharistic Controversies”, *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 24, 2003, pp. 242-246.

<sup>123</sup> See Canlis, p. 114. More of this in the next chapter.

<sup>124</sup> Cited in Canlis, p. 123.

<sup>125</sup> Calvin even proposes that: “Even if man had remained free from all stain, his condition would have been too lowly for him to reach God without a Mediator.” (2.11.1).

<sup>126</sup> “Christ’s mission can only be understood in this larger context of bringing humanity back into the communion that he enjoys with the Father.” Canlis, p. 125.

<sup>127</sup> Canlis, p. 126.

<sup>128</sup> Canlis, p. 5.

<sup>129</sup> Canlis, p. 127.

the Spirit. Ascension is thus one of the ‘auspicious foundations’<sup>130</sup> upon which we can establish our lives (3.6.3). Indeed, when combined with the emphasis on Christ as mediator (in both Creation and Redemption), Ascent is not a gnostic movement *away* from the created world but “a deepened experience of communion *within* it.”<sup>131</sup> Canlis summarises the crucial importance of this doctrine of Ascension for Calvin thus:

For Calvin, the Ascension has three main functions: first, it threw open the realm of Pneumatology and, with it, the historical possibility for human participation in God; second, it represented the future of the Christian as *koinonia*: to be with God, in Christ; third, it functioned as a protective measure to keep God from being manipulated or “pulled down” to our sphere of idolatry and superstition.<sup>132</sup>

This discussion illustrates how Creation and human participation in God is held in a strong Christological framework for Calvin. Yet, crucially, this communion with God through participation in Christ, built into the very basis and purpose of Creation, is not possible without the agency of the third person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. Creator and Creature for Calvin are thus not only held in a Christological framework but also a Pneumatological one. It is this theme we will now look at in the next chapter.

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<sup>130</sup> Canlis, p. 130.

<sup>131</sup> Canlis, p. 54 (emphasis mine).

<sup>132</sup> Canlis, p. 113.

## Chapter 7: Calvin's Doctrine of Participation in God Through Union With Christ: Part 2

### 1. Pneumatological basis

By means of [the Spirit] we come to participate in God (1.13.14)

Canlis argues that what has traditionally been seen as Calvin's overemphasis on the separation of God and the world is not only due to overlooking the importance of the theme of Christ as mediator but also due to a weak reading of Calvin's Pneumatology<sup>1</sup>. Despite the apparent Christological title of Book 3 of the Institutes, Butin argues that in fact "the Holy Spirit is the central divine reality"<sup>2</sup>. Without the Spirit, no Union with Christ, no reception of grace, no adoption is possible.

Taking into account the requirement of faith on the human side of participation (itself a "work of the Holy Spirit" (3.1.4)), Calvin encourages his readers to "climb higher and to examine into the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits." (3.1.1). It is the Spirit who makes human communion with God possible through participating in Christ: "the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself." (3.1.1).

The Spirit is the Trinitarian dynamic at work in the economy of God that incorporates believers into the life of God: "...we become one with him, and being engrafted into him, truly enjoy his

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin's Pneumatology is truly 'innovative' being more akin to Eastern, Cappadocian conceptions of Trinitarian relations, than the expected Augustinian Western views: "Calvin did not deny Augustine's maxim (1.13.25), but it is not adequate to describe Calvin's Trinitarian theology either." Canlis, pp. 95, 98. See also, Butin, pp. 44-5; cf. Thomas F. Torrance, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity in Gregory Nazianzen and John Calvin," in *Trinitarian Perspectives : Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999).

<sup>2</sup>Butin, p. 185; cf. "Calvin understands Christology and Pneumatology to be mutually interrelated." p. 79, fn.21. This argument has been made by Weber in volume 2 of Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981). pp. 131-35, 240-57.

life. It is clear and certain, that this is not done naturally, but by the *secret agency of the Spirit*.”<sup>3</sup>

As Calvin achieves with the Christological locus of mediation, “the bond between humanity and God is again taken away from a Platonic framework where like shares in like, but is reconceived to a personal locale – the person of the Spirit himself”.<sup>4</sup> Participation is in Christ, by the Spirit in response to the mercy and goodness of the Father. It is an ontology of relationship. Participation is personal.

Moreover, by promoting such a strong role for the Spirit in making the bond with Christ effective, Calvin preserves otherness in the midst of divine presence and human communion. Canlis summarises: “He is the agent of participation, bringing humanity into the deep things of God...without violating the very Creation he is making.”<sup>5</sup>

These themes will appear throughout this chapter, but first we must deal in more detail with an area of debate already touched upon: how precisely the Spirit acts as the bond of Union. Should the presence of Christ made effective to the believer be best described as substantial or spiritual? For this we return in more detail to the debate with Osiander from the previous chapter.

### ***1.1. A ‘substantial’ or ‘spiritual’ presence?***

Canlis and Billings differ in their readings of Calvin here. Canlis opts to identify Calvin’s notion of participation in Christ as ‘pneumatological’, whereas Billings prefers ‘substantial’.

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<sup>3</sup> Calvin, *T&T 2:414*. “Last Admonition to Joachim Westphal”.

<sup>4</sup> Canlis, p. 98. See pp. 94-7 for discussion.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 60. See also “The Holy Spirit represents a new way of being *in relationship* – the joining together of two unlikes in a relationship of particularity and yet Union.” p. 98.

Both agree that Union with Christ is not a merely external interaction, but Canlis argues that Calvin's arguments against Osiander and Westphal suggest a 'non-substantial' reading as preferred.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Canlis suggests, that to term the Union 'substantial' does not do enough justice to the uniqueness of Calvin's Trinitarian understanding of participation.<sup>7</sup>

In distinction to Osiander, Calvin does not ultimately propose any kind of physical Union with Christ but instead a participation that can only occur by and in the Spirit. "Whereas Osiander worked in substantial categories, Calvin worked in Spirit-categories".<sup>8</sup> For Canlis, such a reading of the Osiander-Calvin debate is supported by the overall tone of Calvin's sacramentology which warns of the danger that we "devise a Christianity that does not require the Spirit of Christ." (3.2.39). Indeed, in his letter to Martyr, on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1555, Calvin clearly states: "the flesh of Christ is not *per se* vivifying" but only by the Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

A substantialist participation, in Canlis' view, would be in danger of this very trap, and is precisely what Calvin is arguing against in his debates with Osiander:

Osiander, by spurning this spiritual bond, forces a gross mingling of Christ with believers... he holds that God pours himself into us as a gross mixture, just as he fancies a physical eating in the Lord's Supper. (3.11.10).

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<sup>6</sup> See Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God."

<sup>7</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 14, fn. 39. *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension*. Although Canlis does suggest Billings and herself are effectively saying the same thing in their readings despite opting for different terminology.

<sup>8</sup> Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God.", p. 177.

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Martyr, 8 August 1555, John Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. E.Cunitz G.Baum, E.Ruess, 59 vols., Corpus Reformatorum Vols 29-87 (Brunsvigae: Schwetschke, 1863-1900). 15.723 Cited in Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 101.

Canlis argues therefore that for Calvin it is ultimately the Spirit who is the “threshold to participation in God”.<sup>10</sup>

Calvin understands the absolute theological necessity of having the Spirit as the means by which the believer is united with Christ and thus participates ‘in God’<sup>11</sup>: “Calvin’s genius was to perceive that without a genuine role for the Holy Spirit, you cannot help but have a fusion, or divine overwhelming of some sort”.<sup>12</sup> The Spirit is, in Canlis’s summary, the “agent of particularity”, relating things even as he keeps them separate.”<sup>13</sup> The relationship between God and humanity this offers is, as Canlis points out, “far more intimate than infusion of righteousness”.<sup>14</sup> By uniting our humanity to Christ’s risen ascended humanity, the Third Person thus becomes the space and means for God’s intimate hospitality located in the mediation of Christ.

Billings on the other hand, argues that what is key here is to recognize that Calvin’s objection isn’t to Osiander’s use of the word ‘substance’ but rather to any suggestion of ‘inflowing’ or ‘transfusion’ of substance that negates the agency of the Spirit in *facilitating* the Union with Christ.<sup>15</sup> Billings argues that for Calvin, Union with Christ is always only possible by the Spirit’s work, but this does not mean it is not a ‘substantial’ Union with *both* Christ’s divinity and humanity<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 233.

<sup>11</sup> 3.11.5; 4.27.5

<sup>12</sup> Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God." p. 4. See 3.1.2.

<sup>13</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 246.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Cf. p. 250 “His emphasis on Trinitarian differentiation not only combated fusion but also functioned as a necessary ingredient of intimacy.”

<sup>15</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Billings' argument for a substantialist reading is based on texts such as Calvin's commentary on Romans 6:4-5 where Calvin writes we are 'engrafted' into Christ: "we not only derive the strength and sap of the life which flows from Christ, but we also pass from our own nature into his."<sup>17</sup> A similar emphasis is found in Calvin's sacramental theology where Calvin talks of participating in the *substantia* of Christ: "[we are] incorporated with him (so to speak) into one life and substance."<sup>18</sup> Billings thus summarises Calvin's view as a 'substantial participation': "Through participation in Christ, believers participate in his substance and are united into one substance with him.... In baptism and the Lord's Supper, the participation in the substance of Christ is inseparable from participation in the communal Body of Christ on earth, the church."<sup>19</sup> For Billings it is valid to categorise Calvin's notion of participation as 'substantial' as Calvin makes it quite clear in his debate with Osiander that substantial Union does not mean an "'indistinct Union with God' in which the human and the divine are fused"<sup>20</sup>.

Although Billings holds to this label of 'substantial' participation it is difficult to allow a description of Calvin's understanding of the nature of Union with Christ to rest in that category, even allowing for Calvin not providing 'analytic clarity' on what he means by this.<sup>21</sup> Texts such as Calvin's commentary on John 17:21 seem pretty clear: "...we are one with Christ; not because He transfuses his substance into us, but because by the power of His Spirit He communicates to us His life and all the blessings He has received from the Father."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Comm. Rom. 6:5. See Billings, *Calvin*, p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> Comm. 1 Cor. 11:24 in Billings, *Calvin*, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 62.

<sup>20</sup> Billings refers here to the work of Bernard McGinn on medieval understandings of mystical Union: Bernard McGinn, "Love, Knowledge and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries," *Church History* 56, no. 1 (1987).

<sup>21</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 63: "Although Calvin does not always provide analytic clarity on how he uses ontological terms, he does give enough detail to convey that the believer and Christ are not just individuals who share in each other's life. The 'oneness' of the Father and the Son extends to believers who are made one with each other and one with Christ by the Spirit."

<sup>22</sup> Comm. on John 17:21, Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*.



Billings tries to argue that what Calvin is protecting in this passage is the *method* of Union not the nature of Union itself. What Calvin is against is a transfusion of substance rather than, as Billings states, a “oneness with Christ’s substance [by the Spirit] as a perichoretic model of interpenetration.”<sup>23</sup> Billings summarises thus: “Believers receive the substance of Christ not by transfusion, but by the power of the Spirit, who brings the blessings of the Father given to the Son to the community of faith.”<sup>24</sup>

Evans here agrees with Billings: “Calvin’s polemic against Osiander should not be construed as directed against a ‘substantial communion’ with Christ *per se*, but rather against substantial communion of a certain kind – a substantial communion involving the unmediated compounding or ‘mixture’ of the divine and the human.”<sup>25</sup> This is clear in Calvin’s writing to Servetus in 1.15.5: such a Union by “secret inflowing of divinity” as Servetus seemed to be suggesting is “a crass...[and] devilish error!” (1.15.5).

In summary, Union with Christ is a substantial Union with the humanity of Christ by means of the Holy Spirit. This is no participation or mingling with divine substance but a wondrous exchange of fallen humanity for risen humanity in Christ by the Spirit.<sup>26</sup> As Calvin himself writes on the restoration of the image of God in 2 Cor. 3:18: “it is clear that we should infer from his [Paul’s] words that man is made to conform to God, not by an inflowing of substance, but by the grace and power of the Spirit...[God] works in us without rendering us consubstantial with God.” (1.15.5)

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<sup>23</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 64.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Evans, pp. 25-6.

<sup>26</sup> The sacramental elements thus for example are dependent on Christ’s mediatorial life – they communicate the very life of Christ when the Spirit is at work joining the believer in partaking of the sacrament – to the risen humanity of Christ. See Evans, p. 27 for more.

Billings is correct in ultimately concluding that Calvin did not want to leave behind the category of ‘substantial’ participation in order to ensure his theology was different from any concept of merely imitating Christ<sup>27</sup>. And yet as we have seen, when the debate with Osiander is looked at in the light of the wider Calvin literature, it is clear that this incredible *koinonia* of divine-human relationship can only happen by the agency of the Spirit: “He unites himself to us by the Spirit alone. By the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members, that he may hold us together under himself, and that we may also in turn dwell in him.” (3.1.2)<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Calvin’s commentary on John 14:20 reads: “In short, the bond of Christ’s relationship with God the Father is identical to the bond of the believer’s relationship with God the Son, because in both cases that bond is God the Holy Spirit.”<sup>29</sup>

Participation for Calvin *must* be substantial in nature (as Billings) so as to ensure the humanity of Christ (the descent and ascent of God in Christ through the nexus of the Cross) is protected as the channel for grace and the cross is not neglected in pursuit of a purely ‘spiritual’ infusion of the divine nature into the believer. On the other hand, participation *must* also be ‘spiritual’ in nature (as Canlis) so as to ensure there is no possibility theologically of a misunderstood ‘local’ presence of Christ (for example in the elements of the Eucharist) that can then be manipulated or controlled by the priest.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “The Body of believers is given *oneness* with Christ such that they do not follow Christ at a distance. They follow Christ by partaking of Christ along the Christian path of death, resurrection, and ascension – living lives *en Christo*.” Billings, *Calvin*, p. 65.

<sup>28</sup> See also, “Christ does not otherwise dwell in us than through his Spirit, nor in any other way communicate himself to us than through the same Spirit.” John Calvin, “Summary of Doctrine concerning the Ministry of Word and Sacrament,” in John Calvin, *Theological Treatises*, ed. J.K.S.Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954). p. 172.

<sup>29</sup> Cited, Butin, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup> More of this later as we look in more detail at Calvin’s sacramentology.

It is correct to therefore say, *both* Billings and Canlis are right in their respective choice of naming the nature of Calvin's Union with Christ. It is both substantial *and* spiritual.<sup>31</sup> It is clear Calvin calls it 'substantial' himself<sup>32</sup> and so being faithful to the historical texts, that is the category that should be used. However, in terms of clarifying what Calvin *means* by 'substantial' it seems clear that a substantial Union *by the Spirit* is a more accurate description and therefore describing it as a 'spiritual' Union is also a valid and perhaps more helpful contemporary label (avoiding metaphysical traps) for the nature of the Union (as Canlis). Willis is helpful here: "one of the strengths of Calvin's Eucharistic doctrine is that he *does* use substance in expressing the Eucharistic presence of Christ. Another strength is the *way* he uses it: he uses it critically as a theological term – not primarily, perhaps not at all, as a consciously philosophical term."<sup>33</sup> Calvin is concerned to have a real or, more accurately as we shall see, 'true' presence of Christ for the believers but not as understood by his Catholic contemporaries as a presence where Christ's flesh is 'eaten'. It is a uniquely nuanced notion of presence which holds a true presence of Christ *by the Spirit*.

## 1.2 Rethinking 'presence'

This technical discussion is important so as to understand how Calvin could go on to "rethink presence"<sup>34</sup>. A passage from Calvin's sacramental theology is enlightening here and worth quoting in full:

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<sup>31</sup> Evans is helpful here in his summary: "Throughout his career and in a wide variety of contexts and settings – exegetical, controversial, and liturgical – Calvin insists that believers partake of Christ's 'substance'. But these forthright passages must be evaluated over against other statements by the Reformer which appear to place severe limits on the 'substantial' communion involved." Evans, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> See Evans, p. 23 on this. Cf. David Willis, "Calvin's Use of Substantia," in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (New York: P.Lang, 1984).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 299.

<sup>34</sup> Canlis, p. 116. Note, more time will be spent on this theme later in the chapter when Calvin's sacramental theology is touched on.

But greatly mistaken are those who conceive no presence of flesh in the Supper unless it lies in the bread. For thus they leave nothing to the secret working of the Spirit, which unites Christ himself to us. To them Christ does not seem present unless he comes down to us. As though, if he should lift us to himself, we should not just as much enjoy his presence! The question is therefore only of the manner, for they place Christ in the bread, while we do not think it lawful for us to drag him from heaven.... For since this mystery is heavenly, there is no need to draw Christ to earth that he may be joined to us. (4.17.31)

The Ascension meant, for Calvin, that the presence of God was not the presence of Jesus ‘come down’ in some way. That is part of the ‘descent’ that has already occurred in the Incarnation. Rather, ‘presence’ is found in the person of Christ, mediated to us by the Spirit, as risen and exalted one. As we have seen, the only way to access ‘presence’ is thus by means of the Spirit lifting us ‘up’ to join with his risen humanity.

How should we understand Calvin’s view of the Spirit in the light of this? Canlis states: “The Spirit is not a spiritualized mode of Christ; rather, the Spirit is the person in whom we now have access to the embodied Jesus.”<sup>35</sup> The Spirit is thus the only person of the Trinity who, it is appropriate to say, now has ‘descended’ (at Pentecost). Pentecost, following the Ascension, makes the presence of God as Union between our humanity and his ascended humanity by the Spirit possible and activated in history.

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<sup>35</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 117.

The ‘flesh’ presence of Christ on earth is thus no longer technically possible. Calvin writes in his discussion in 4.17.26: “Christ cannot dwell with us according to the flesh in the same way that he sends his Spirit.” It would represent a form of ‘unmediated presence’.<sup>36</sup> Any presence of God in Christ with humanity is now in the key of the Spirit; it has been “transposed”<sup>37</sup>. Ascension and Pentecost doctrine thus make a “historical watershed”<sup>38</sup> for our understanding of divine presence. In his commentary on John 16:28, Calvin insists that being with Jesus during his descent, as the disciples were, is nothing compared to the glory of participating in his ascended reality by the Spirit post-Pentecost.<sup>39</sup>

Human participation in Christ and the life of Christ in the believer is now the domain of the Spirit. The perceived presence of God is the activity of the Spirit activating this domain. The Spirit doesn’t merely take us *to* the things of Christ but *into* the life of Christ which is *koinonia* with the life of the Trinity.<sup>40</sup> Christ thus is not a stepping stone which the Spirit enables us to step on in order to achieve ‘higher’ things such as ‘adoption’ or other ‘benefits’ of Union with God.<sup>41</sup> Canlis shows this by highlighting how Calvin uses *in* Christ rather than *through* Christ in several passages (Commentary on Rom 6.11; 1 Corinthians 1.4; 2 Corinthians 5.21). The realm of the Spirit is the ‘church-in-Christ’: “[Calvin] refuses the notion that by or through Christ our reality has been altered; rather, our reality is only altered as we dwell *in* him – by the Spirit”.<sup>42</sup> The Spirit therefore doesn’t so much bring the benefits of Christ to us but works

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<sup>36</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 118.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 117.

<sup>39</sup> Comm. John 16.28. Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries*.

<sup>40</sup> See Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 156.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 157: “Christ is thus made an instrument of a process rather than the person in whom adoption is found.” Calvin here, she argues, is wanting to avoid any merely functional Christology where worshippers “sought in Christ something else than Christ himself”.

<sup>42</sup> See Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 158.

them within us. The person of the Spirit brings us into the person of the Son, not merely delivers his benefits.<sup>43</sup>

## 2. The human: ‘dependant anthropology’

In the light of this reading of participation and Union with Christ, what are the implications for understanding the human and the human fulfilled in God? How does Union with Christ in a Pneumatological frame answer some of the critics of Calvin’s so called negative anthropology and what does it have to say about the divine-human relationship?

Although Calvin didn’t use the phrase ‘total depravity’ himself<sup>44</sup>, it is certainly true that with his doctrine of the Will he held that every part of human life is affected by sin and that “sinful humans cannot perform any ‘saving good’ apart from the Spirit’s effectual work”<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Calvin’s anthropology has seemed traditionally very Augustinian in its emphasis on the sinfulness of human nature. This fallen state whereby the human will is in bondage to sin results in the “powerlessness of the human to move towards the good *telos* of Creation” and a theology whereby “in salvation and sanctification, humans seem to contribute nothing”<sup>46</sup>. Calvin even writes of the ‘obliteration’ of ‘everything which is ours’ upon regeneration.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Canlis argues on p.152 that this reading of Calvin’s Pneumatology is a corrective to the “persuasive flatness” in existing readings of Calvin’s understanding of the Spirit whereby the Spirit is merely a ‘bridge’ between believer and Christ and the means or instrument by which we receive his ‘benefits’. She is indebted to Rowan Williams for this view: see Williams, “Word and Spirit”, in *On Christian Theology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) pp.105-27.

<sup>44</sup> For more see Marguerite Shuster, *The Fall and Sin : What We Have Become as Sinners* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub., 2004).

<sup>45</sup> See Jean Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will : A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*, ed. Anthony Nigel Sidney Lane and Graham I. Davies, Texts & Studies in Reformation & Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press, 1996). pp. 68-89 and Billings, p.11.

<sup>46</sup> Billings, p .43.

<sup>47</sup> Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, p. 212. Cited in Billings, p .43.

Central to Billings', Canlis', and Butin's readings of Calvin is their argument for a far more nuanced reading of this classic reading of Calvin's view of the human condition. Billings for example emphasizes Calvin's work outside of the Institutes in order to illustrate this – especially the overlooked '*The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighuis*'.<sup>48</sup>

In this work Calvin uses the Aristotelian categories of 'substance' and 'accident' in order to explain the tension in the human condition. The substance of the human condition remains good: humans are made in the image of God, and even originally 'united' to God in Adam.<sup>49</sup> Where corruption comes in, it is not a total destruction of this 'substance' but rather a new orientation towards sin introduced to the human condition, and 'accidental' to it.<sup>50</sup> It is important to note that Calvin is not reluctantly retreating into some Aristotelian philosophy but actually stepping further into patristic tradition to explain the eschatologically orientated regeneration that occurs in Christ: "Although Calvin utilizes Aristotelian categories to do so, he employs them to clarify the Irenaean motif that redemption in Christ, the second Adam, fulfils and restores the Creation"<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, Calvin still held that the image of God remained somehow in fallen humanity<sup>52</sup>: "The beginning of our recovery of salvation is in that restoration which we obtain through Christ, who also is called the Second Adam for the reason that he restores us to true and complete integrity." (1.15.4)

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<sup>48</sup> "Calvin makes important distinctions and qualifications to his position which are not included in the later editions of the institutes." Billings, p. 44.

<sup>49</sup> For more on Calvin's view of repentance see 3.3.5-9 and original sin 2.1.5.

<sup>50</sup> For more see J. Todd Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification," *Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 3 (2005). p. 320.

<sup>51</sup> Billings, p. 49. For more on the link between Calvin and Irenaeus see Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, pp. 173-228. Also, pp. 685-6 Johannes Van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West : From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, (ed.) Irena Dorota Backus (Leiden ; New York: E.J. Brill, 1997).

<sup>52</sup> See, for example 1.2.1.

Billings argues that, when read through this lens, any of Calvin's negative statements on humanity are seen to be more about the dangers of self-sufficiency and human pride in establishing ourselves as independent from God rather than comprehensive statements on the human condition: "Thus, when Calvin says that 'whatever is ours' is obliterated in regeneration, he is not being 'negative' about humanity but 'negative' about sin."<sup>53</sup>

Against medieval theologies of grace that over-emphasised human capacities, Calvin is therefore emphasizing that there is nothing in us to enable our bond with God ("more is required of us than we can pay" 2.5.9).<sup>54</sup> It is purely the Mediator who can unite us to God, never our own 'righteousness'<sup>55</sup>. Thus the *imago dei* is utterly reliant on participation in God, rather than being an independent, inbuilt attribute of humanity: "Adam bore God's image in so far as he was joined to God." (2.12.6)<sup>56</sup>

Through this lens, Calvin's anthropology not only disagrees with the Radical Orthodoxy reading of 'unilateral gift' and the simplistic 'total depravity' of the 'TULIP' Calvinism acronym<sup>57</sup>, but it also crucially offers exciting prospects for constructive theology surrounding the Creator-Creature relationship. If at the heart of humanity is relationship with God, then salvation by the gift of God in Christ offers not a total wiping out of our humanity, but a restoration of our 'substance' as Adamic creatures built for relationship with God. Billings: "[the] insistence on the bondage of the will to sin reflects a theology of salvation that has an exalted place for humanity: full humanity is humanity in communion with God."<sup>58</sup> Human

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<sup>53</sup> Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification." p. 318.

<sup>54</sup> See Canlis, pp. 76-83 and Thomas F. Torrance, "The Word of God and the Nature of Man," in *Theology in Reconstruction* (S.C.M.Press, 1965).

<sup>55</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 63.

<sup>56</sup> See also B. A. Gerrish, "The Mirror of God's Goodness: Man in the Theology of Calvin," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45 (1981).

<sup>57</sup> For more on this see Billings, *Calvin*, pp. 57-60.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.



identity is not therefore destroyed or overwhelmed but actually *restored*.<sup>59</sup> Billings summarises: “[we] were created to be in communion with God, [so] when the Spirit leads us back into communion with God in Christ, we do not lose our true selves, we regain them.”<sup>60</sup>

This restoration of our *imago dei* occurs for Calvin, when we are united with Christ by the Spirit. It is only in that place that our full potential as creatures becomes possible once again. It is only by the Spirit that our turn towards sin can be broken. Crucially, confirming the Christological centre of Calvin’s theology of mediation, this means that “there is continuity between Creation and redemption...God’s grace *restores* the Creation rather than simply replacing it.”<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, an emphasis on divine agency does not diminish human agency; rather “full deity and full humanity belong together in communion”.<sup>62</sup> Thus whenever the Spirit works within us, it is an “activation of our human faculties”.<sup>63</sup> Calvin’s view here, Billings argues, is thoroughly Augustinian in foundation – in particular building on Augustine’s underutilized Christology where the deity of the Word uniting to the humanity of the flesh in the Incarnation provides a pattern in regard to agency for all humanity. Although Christ is unique in being in very nature the eternally begotten son of the Father, harmonized divine and human agency can be experienced by all humanity in a similar pattern to the second Adam by adoption, by grace, by Union to Christ by the Spirit.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> As Billings argues, Calvin is heavily indebted to Irenaeus and Augustine in this theology and therefore needs to be re-assessed as situated more truly in the Catholic tradition rather than a breakaway radical protestant reactionary. See Billings, pp. 320-322.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 45. See Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, p. 99: “[grace’s purpose is to] restore the nature that has fallen and has been overturned and make it stand upright.”

<sup>62</sup> Billings, p. 43.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> For more on this see E. D. Willis, *Calvin’s Catholic Christology : The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin’s Theology*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966). p.79

Moreover, this strong biblical theology of sin is crucial context for understanding the strength of Calvin's soteriology - comprehending the wonder of the extraordinary gift of grace that is Union with Christ. Humanity not living in Union with Christ can do 'nothing' (John 15.5), is enslaved to sin (Rom. 8.34) and 'dead' (Col. 2.13). Thus Calvin's theology of the bondage of the will<sup>65</sup> is not misanthropic but actually a necessary, and biblical, waypoint towards the exaltation of humanity as created for communion with God.

Canlis similarly argues that what Calvin was against was any notion of humanity defined "without reference to Christ."<sup>66</sup> Canlis designates therefore Calvin's view as a 'dependent anthropology' – humankind can only flourish when united to Christ by the Spirit.<sup>67</sup> This is their very created condition and orientation – "The proper condition of creatures is to keep close to God."<sup>68</sup> Life thus is the "presence of God" and death is to be "without God".<sup>69</sup> Calvin's doctrine of sin and the human condition thus actually makes for a very "dynamic" and "eschatological" anthropology – a humanity that begins and ends in Christ.<sup>70</sup> Human Participation in the divine for Calvin is therefore "not a principle...[but] a way of living such that everything forces us to be in relationship."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Billings prefers 'bondage of choice' as choice has not been limited. See Billings, p. 37, fn.1.

<sup>66</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 65.

<sup>67</sup> For example, "Without [the Spirit] no one can taste either the fatherly favour of God or the beneficence of Christ" (3.1.2). This is an example of Canlis' leaning towards the 'spiritual' and organic reading of the *duplex gratia* compared to Billings' equal emphasis on the 'forensic' imputation of righteousness. Yet, her designation of Calvin's anthropology as 'dependent anthropology' is suitable for both readings. Humanity is dependent on being united to Christ by the Spirit, which includes *both* aspects of the *duplex gratia* in order to fulfil its original design and intent made in the image of God. The fallen human requires righteousness *and* the Holy Spirit to commune with God. Or perhaps more accurately, the human communes with God by means of the Spirit uniting them to Christ in whom they receive an imputation of righteousness.

<sup>68</sup> Comm. on Eph. 1.10. Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*.

<sup>69</sup> Calvin Psychopannychia T & T III p. 454. in Canlis, p. 74.

<sup>70</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 72.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 76.

In summary, although fallen, humanity is awaiting activation by the double grace received in Union with Christ in order to fulfil its original intent and possibility as a creature flourishing by relationship with its Creator<sup>72</sup>. A strong doctrine of sin is actually an absolutely necessary foundation for a robust theology of participating in God and Union with Christ.<sup>73</sup>

### 3. The human: deification and adoption

The extraordinary corollary of the believers' Union with Christ is a participation in the very triune life of God himself. By insisting in a participation in the *whole* person of Christ ("we do not divide Christ" 3.11.8)<sup>74</sup> Calvin positions the believer as participating in the life of the Trinity itself.<sup>75</sup>

Although Calvin "does not indulge in detailed speculation about this final eschatological end, his language concerning a Trinitarian incorporation of humanity into Union with God is clear and emphatic."<sup>76</sup> Calvin is clear we do not become 'consubstantial with God' (1.15.5) or, as Billings puts it, "a fourth member of the Godhead".<sup>77</sup> Instead the unity with God occurs by the believer being *in Christ* by the 'grace and power of the Spirit' (1.15.5): "By 'beholding Christ's glory, we are being transformed into his very image...as through the Spirit of the Lord' [2 Cor 3:18], who surely works in us without rendering us consubstantial with God." By being united to Christ, our *telos* is to share in His life in relation to the Father and the Spirit.

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<sup>72</sup> See p. 317, Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification."

<sup>73</sup> As Billings notes: "a doctrine of the bondage of the will, or what some call 'total depravity', corresponds to a doctrine of total communion in which salvation involves a multifaceted communion with God." Billings, *Calvin*, p. 11.

<sup>74</sup> We are justified by Christ's death and resurrection not merely by participation in his eternally divine nature. (3.11.8).

<sup>75</sup> *Institutes* 3.11.5

<sup>76</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 53.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

Can the category of ‘deification’ thus be used for Calvin’s notion of Union with Christ? Calvin does indeed use the term, for example, in his commentary on 2 Peter 1:4 where the goal of the gospel will be to “render us eventually conformable to God, and, if we may so speak, to deify us.”<sup>78</sup> Billings argues that it therefore can be used so long as it is defined as “a soteriology that affirms the unity of humanity and divinity, such that redemption involves the transformation of believers to be incorporated into the Triune life of God, while remaining creatures.”<sup>79</sup> In this regard Calvin’s understanding of 2 Peter 1.4 is clearly Augustinian and not akin to the Eastern Orthodox notion of *theosis*.<sup>80</sup>

Union with God in Christ is never a ‘fusion’ or assimilation of the creature into the Creator.<sup>81</sup> There is no “secret inflowing of divinity” – the human soul is not in any way a derived part of God’s essence or substance for “who would not shudder at this monstrous thing?” (1.15.5). Although humans have the image of God ‘engraved’ upon them, they are “just as much created as angels are”. Moreover, if it hasn’t been clear enough already, Calvin states that Christ is not “pouring his own substance into us!” (1.15.5).

In this regard, Billings states that the language of ‘deification’ is perhaps better understood as part of hyperbolic language rather than literal for Calvin: “he stands in continuity with patristic authors such as Irenaeus and Athanasius, who used the language of deification, but in a hyperbolic way”<sup>82</sup>. Billings points out by way of example Calvin’s commentary on 2 Peter 1:4

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<sup>78</sup> Comm. 2 Peter 1:4, Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*.

<sup>79</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 54.

<sup>80</sup> See Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification." For more on Calvin and deification see, in particular analysis of all the key texts: Carl Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 1 (2002).

<sup>81</sup> It is not a deification whereby there is “a leakage of divine attributes into human attributes...when the believer is in Christ some divine attributes remain exclusively his.” Billings, *Calvin*, p. 55.

<sup>82</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 55. Billings similarly points out Gregory of Nyssa “who emphasised the hyperbolic nature of the language”, p.55, fn. 140.

where Calvin writes God will ‘deify us’ ‘if we may so speak’. Or in other translations, it is ‘a kind of deification’ that Peter is writing about (*quasi deificari*).<sup>83</sup>

It is helpful to place this talk of a ‘kind of deification’ in the wider context of Calvin’s use of the biblical language of adoption:

Therefore God both calls himself our Father and would have us so address him. By the great sweetness of this name he frees us from all distrust, since no greater feeling of love can be found elsewhere than in the Father. Therefore he could not attest his own boundless love toward us with any surer proof than the fact that we are called “children of God. (3.20.37)

Adoption for Calvin is not only the background goal of Union with Christ but as we have begun to see also the fundamental shape of this communion with God through the gateway of the double grace:<sup>84</sup> “After the only-begotten Son of God was brought into the world, the heavenly fatherhood became more clearly known...we are now sons of God through Christ, we freely and confidently cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” (2.14.5). Union is therefore best understood as not merely a ‘transaction’ but more an “exchange of sonship”.<sup>85</sup>

Again, it is the Spirit who is essential in making our adoption possible. In his commentary on John 14:20, Calvin states that we will never be able to fully understand the ‘mystical Union’ between Christ and us and between Jesus and the Father, but he makes it clear that: “the only way of knowing it is when he diffuses his life in us by the secret efficacy of the Spirit.” Canlis

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<sup>83</sup> See Ibid, p. 55, fn. 140.

<sup>84</sup> See 2.14.5. Cf. Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 131f.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, pp. 9, 12.

writes: “For Calvin, the only way to protect creature-hood was to have Union with a triune God, whose own differentiation makes room for human particularity.”<sup>86</sup>

The Spirit is thus the agency of this Union between us and Christ *and* the boundary maintaining the integrity of both parties. The Creature and the Creator are united and preserved in sharing in the humanity of Christ by the Spirit’s agency. Human ‘sonship’ in Calvin is therefore a critical boundary-marker, signifying that humanity is not directly ushered into the unity experienced between Father and Son eternally, but rather into Jesus’ human expression and experience of that communion.”<sup>87</sup> As we saw in 1.15.5, humans cannot become consubstantial with the Father, but rather become co-present to the Father by being alive in Christ by the agency of the Spirit. Our participation in the triune community is therefore crucially ‘indirect’<sup>88</sup> preserving the integrity and particularity of both parties. Adoption is distinctly Trinitarian<sup>89</sup> for Calvin and the human participation in divine life it offers is ‘radical’<sup>90</sup>.

For Canlis, adoption is not merely a picture or metaphor of salvation for Calvin but “a term that describes an ontological reality.”<sup>91</sup> Calvin suggests humanity is incorporated into the immanent relations of the Trinity by participation in Christ. Union with Christ is therefore actually the “inclusion in a specific relationship through the economic action of God.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 137.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 138.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 138.

<sup>89</sup> Butin writes: “For Calvin, the Trinity was not an abstract principle from which the rest of theology could be logically deduced. Rather, the Trinity is the living God – graciously related to human beings through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit – as articulated in the New Testament.” Butin, p. 124. For discussion of Calvin’s Trinitarian thought in general in the context of the history of Trinitarian theology see *ibid*, pp. 128-9.

<sup>90</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 138; cf. p. 237: “For Calvin, adoption is what safeguards us from being deified, or fused into the divine, in that it is grounded in Trinitarian differentiation.”

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. 133. See pp. 132-135 for discussion.

<sup>92</sup> Canlis, Canlis, “Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God.” p. 133. Cf. Butin, p. 43: “The most striking aspect of Calvin’s...idea...is his bold inclusion of believers in the *perichoresis* of the divine life through their participation in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Here, in addition, Calvin is explicitly concerned to insist that it is *our mediator* that we are to regard Christ as one with the Father.”

In this regard Canlis points out the similarity between Calvin's Trinitarianism and Irenaeus'. Much as Irenaeus' model helps emphasise the personal and experiential nature of God's relations with humanity by the 'two hands' analogy, so Calvin's does: "In one deft move, Calvin has relocated 'participation' from between impersonals (the soul in the divine nature) to personals (the human being in Christ, by the Spirit)."<sup>93</sup> The emphasis on the *function* of each member of the Trinity is a move away for Calvin from impersonal Augustinian conceptions of the Trinity: "As a result, Calvin pioneered a Trinitarian model based on the mutuality of the work of the Son and Spirit."<sup>94</sup> This is the unique Pneumatology that Calvin offers. It is a Pneumatology that is broader than the traditional notions of 'grace' opting for far more 'personal' articulations of the Spirit's nature and work:<sup>95</sup> the preserver and enabler of divine-human relationship.

#### 4. Sacraments and prayer: Union made visible

It is useful to end our discussion of Calvin with some examples of how his understanding outlined above of the divine-human relationship was displayed in practice. Two particular areas for Calvin where grace is 'made visible'<sup>96</sup> are prayer<sup>97</sup> and the sacraments (particularly the Lord's Supper)<sup>98</sup> in book 4 of the Institutes. Here we see how Calvin's doctrine of participation

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<sup>93</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 50.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. 96. Cf. Butin, p. 127: Union with Christ is, "irreducibly Trinitarian in all its dimensions."

<sup>95</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 96: "Here Calvin shifts the commonly conceived connection between Christ and the Father from shared substance to include the person of the Holy Spirit...the Spirit becomes the key player in the descent and ascent of Christ."

<sup>96</sup> See Book 4 of the Institutes in particular. Calvin was fairly Augustinian in this understanding of the role of the sacraments. (See 4.14.1 for example). For discussion see Butin, pp. 102-6; cf. Billings, p. 109f.

<sup>97</sup> "Calvin's writing on prayer provides a glimpse of the believer's experience of adoption in the life of faith." Billings, p. 109.

<sup>98</sup> Here, Calvin saw sacrament and preaching the word of God as equally making grace visible and facilitating Union with Christ: "Let it be regarded as a settled principle that the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace." (4.14.17)

and theology of Union with Christ are key in forming a new adopted identity<sup>99</sup> for the human through participation in church practices.

#### ***4.1 'True' presence – Union with Christ***

Firstly, we return to the issue of the nature in which Calvin meant there to be a 'presence' of God in Christ for the church. Debates about the sacraments, not only against the Catholic transubstantiation position, but also against fellow reformers such as Luther and Zwingli, helped Calvin clarify his thinking: "Christ is the only food of our souls, and therefore our Heavenly Father invites us to Christ." (4.17.1)

The challenge for Calvin was how to assert that this human participation in Christ in the sacrament is "a true and actual Union between believer and Christ"<sup>100</sup> whilst avoiding any sense of a localized presence. If Christ is present and available to be 'nourished' from; if He is the 'substance' existing in a differentiated Union with the sign of the elements; is his presence not local? Moreover, if the Spirit is the key agency at work in the sacramental encounter is not the Spirit also in danger of being contained in a 'local' sacramental presence? Calvin wanted to avoid both Lutheran (consubstantiation) and Roman Catholic (transubstantiation) sacramentology with language of 'in', 'with' and 'under'<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>99</sup> Billings. p. 116 calls this the "Trinitarian mode of transforming believers".

<sup>100</sup> Joseph N. Tylenda, "Calvin and Christ's Presence in the Supper — True or Real?", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 27 (1974). p. 69.

<sup>101</sup> For more see Billings, p. 135.



For Calvin, divine presence must not be localized or circumscribed. This would be a “gross fiction”<sup>102</sup>: ‘Let no one falsely imagine that the body is as it were brought down from heaven and enclosed in the bread’<sup>103</sup>. This is also seen in the key passages in the Institutes themselves:

We must establish such a presence of Christ in the Supper as may neither fasten him to the element of bread, nor enclose him in bread, nor circumscribe him in any way (all which things, it is clear, detract from his heavenly glory); finally, such as may not take from him his own stature, or parcel him out to too many places at once, or invest him with boundless magnitude plainly in conflict with a nature truly human (4.17.19)

Similarly, in his *Last Admonition* to Westphal, Calvin writes: “our view is, that though Christ in respect of his human nature is in heaven, yet distance of place does not prevent him from communicating himself to us—that he not only sustains and governs us by his Spirit, but renders that flesh in which he fulfilled our righteousness vivifying to us. Without any change of place, his virtue penetrates to us by the secret operation of his Spirit, so that our souls obtain spiritual life from his substance”.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, Calvin argued for two clauses that protected from this danger of local presence:

(1) “Let nothing be withdrawn from Christ’s heavenly glory – as happens when he is brought under the corruptible elements of this world, or bound to any earthy creatures.

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<sup>102</sup> Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, p. 280; CO 9.72

<sup>103</sup> Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, p. 278; CO 9.71

<sup>104</sup> Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, p. 384; CO 9.170

(2) Let nothing inappropriate to human nature be ascribed to his body, as happens when it is said to be infinite or to be put in a number of places at once.” (4.17.12)

Tylenda, (using Calvin’s *Short Treatise on the Lord’s Supper* (1541) as well as some of his treatise dealing with controversies surrounding the sacrament: for example the correspondences to Lutheran ministers, Joachim Westphal (1510-74) and Tileman Heshusius (1527-88))<sup>105</sup> argues that therefore Calvin articulated the mode of Christ’s presence not so much as a ‘real’ presence (that suggested a corporeal presence) but a ‘true presence’.<sup>106</sup>

In Calvin’s first answer to Westphal (1555), he explains:

None of us denies that the body and blood of Christ are communicated to us. But the question is, what is the nature of this communication of our Lord’s body and blood? I wonder how these men dare to assert simply and openly that it is carnal. When we say that it is spiritual, they roar out as if by this term we were making it not to be what they commonly call real.<sup>107</sup>

But it is important to note that for Calvin, Christ’s body *is* truly present – and the believer has a ‘substantial’ Union with Christ in some manner, otherwise the elements are merely a sign: “Calvin’s spiritual is not something imaginary or fanciful, it is an actual, real communication by means of which the believer enjoys Christ in reality.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> In Vol. 2 of Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 69.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. Calvin goes on to express his preference for the term ‘true’ presence rather than ‘real’.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 70.

For unless a man means to call God a deceiver, he would never dare assert that an empty symbol is set forth by him. Therefore, if the Lord truly represents the participation in his body through the breaking of bread, there ought not to be the least doubt that he truly presents and shows his body. And the godly ought by all means to keep this rule: whenever they see symbols appointed by the Lord, to think and be persuaded that the truth of the thing signified is surely present there. (4.17.10)<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, as we have seen, it is a substantial Union not only with the divinity of Christ but with the whole of Christ – further evidence of which is found in Calvin’s refutation of Heshusius.<sup>110</sup> However, as we have seen, it is by the Spirit alone that this Union occurs: “The Spirit alone causes us to possess Christ completely and have him dwelling in us.” (4.17.12)<sup>111</sup> Thus, for Calvin, there *is* a ‘real’ (albeit ‘true’) presence in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, but it is the presence of the risen Christ *by the Spirit* efficacious through the faith of the believers<sup>112</sup>.

In this presence the gifts of the Father are received by the believer through their Union with Christ by the Spirit.<sup>113</sup> Christ thus *is* the ‘substance’ of the sacrament (4.14.16) but he is *not* the ‘sign’.<sup>114</sup> Rather the sign (the elements) and the substance are united but differentiated which avoids any idolatrous worship of the elements themselves – Creation rather than Creator: “What is idolatry if not this: to worship the gifts in place of the Giver himself?” 4.17.36

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<sup>109</sup> For more see Brian A. Gerrish, “Sign and Reality: The Lord’s Supper in the Reformed Confessions” in *The Old Protestantism and the New* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982). p. 65

<sup>110</sup> See Calvin’s *TT*, p. 287.

<sup>111</sup> Although it is important to note the tension of other texts such as 4.17.7: “Moreover, I am not satisfied with those persons who, recognizing that we have some communion with Christ, when they would show what it is, make us partakers of the Spirit only, omitting to mention of flesh and blood.”

<sup>112</sup> “Calvin is one with the other Christian communions in teaching a presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper.” Tylenda, *Calvin and Christ’s Presence in the Supper*, p. 65.

<sup>113</sup> See Billings, p. 118.

<sup>114</sup> For more on Calvin’s use of Augustine’s framework of sign and substance see Chapter 8 of Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Oliver & Boyd, 1953).

Christ, mediated to the believer by the Spirit, can never therefore be spoken of as ‘in’, ‘with’, or ‘under’ the elements as He is not in any way ‘carnally’ present.<sup>115</sup> Billings: “the flesh of Christ is made vivifying by the agency of the Spirit, so that Christ is in us because the Spirit of God dwells in us.”<sup>116</sup> It is clear that for Calvin, the only mediator of divine reality is Christ and the only way to enter that reality whilst preserving the Creator/Creature differentiation is by means of the Holy Spirit.

Speaking of his Lutheran and Catholic interlocutors, he writes that they: “drag him [Christ] from heaven” (4.17.30) rather than holding a theology of the believer’s ascent with Christ into participation in God and nourishment from Christ and the gifts of God in him by the Spirit. Christ’s body can never be “‘enclosed’ or ‘contained’ in an earthly institution.”<sup>117</sup> For Calvin, it is a *dependent* presence – dependent on the Spirit and the faith of the people.<sup>118</sup>

However, as we have seen, Calvin holds a unique position here whereby he also wishes to retain the sacramental presence as a ‘substantial’ presence rather than a ‘ubiquitous body’, his logic being that, “the body of Christ *must* be able to be circumscribed if it is to be a true body.”<sup>119</sup> Moreover, without the incarnated body of Christ being somehow communicated to the believer, how will the (created, ‘incarnate’) body of the believer truly be redeemed?<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 136.

<sup>116</sup> Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification." p. 331.

<sup>117</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 139; Cf. 4.17.12. and see Evans, p. 21.

<sup>118</sup> For more on this theme see E. D. Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966). p. 22.

<sup>119</sup> Billings, p. 135. Cf.: “It is plain from Scripture that the body of Christ is finite, and has its own dimensions.” Calvin *TT* 311. Cf, *Institutes* 4.17.12.

<sup>120</sup> See: *TT* 2.401-2; *CO* 9.183 Cited in p. 136 Billings.

Greatly mistaken are those who conceive no presence of flesh in the Supper unless it lies in the bread. For thus they leave nothing to the secret working of the Spirit, which unites Christ himself to us. (4.17.31)

Billings points out that Calvin needed the flesh of Christ to be somehow understood as present as it is the incarnate flesh that channels the divine salvation grace to the believer.<sup>121</sup>

For as the eternal Word of God is the fountain of life, so His Flesh is a channel to pour out to us the life which resides intrinsically, as they say, in His divinity. In this sense it is called life-giving because it communicates to us a life that it borrows from elsewhere.<sup>122</sup>

This is where Calvin's emphasis on Ascension is so crucial. Through partaking in the sacraments the believers not only participate in Christ's descent but also his resurrection and ascension: "To them Christ does not seem present unless he comes down to us. As though, if he should lift us to himself, we should not just as much enjoy his presence..." (4.17.31). Believers are 'lifted up' to His body at the right hand of the Father. This is how the new life of sanctification occurs for Calvin.

This 'being lifted up' has at its heart the Trinitarian adoptionism we have already seen<sup>123</sup>. From the very first line on the Eucharist in the Institutes this context of adoption is clear: "God has received us, once for all, into his family, to hold us not only as servants but as sons." (4.17.1).

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<sup>121</sup> See also the previous chapter's discussion of the Christological centre of Union with Christ.

<sup>122</sup> Comm. John 6:51; Cf. Wallace. pp. 145-149; Willis. pp. 78-100.

<sup>123</sup> "In receiving the gift of Christ's death, one receives the propitiatory offering from the eternal priest, bringing the pardon that reveals the gracious mercy of the Father. This is the first grace of the Lord's Supper. Next, however, believers are given new life by the Spirit to participate in the resurrection and ascension of Christ...this is the second grace of the Lord's Supper." Billings, p. 136.

God is our “most excellent Father” (4.17.1). We are not only to follow Christ or copy his moral teaching but to be incorporated into his very being – to be united with him in order to be adopted.<sup>124</sup> In fact the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is given to us precisely to assure of us of our adoption (4.17.1). It is a ‘high mystery’ and an “inestimable treasure” (4.17.1).

Therefore, simply put, Christ can be “substantially available without being locally present” according to Calvin<sup>125</sup>. Local presence is the wrong category to understand the presence of Christ in the sacrament for Calvin. This makes Calvin’s sacramentology a “matter of considerable conceptual complexity”!<sup>126</sup> Indeed, Calvin himself writes of the ‘mystery’ of this ‘heavenly’ encounter (4.17.31). Moreover, spatial distance is not the correct framework to understand the work of the Spirit in the encounter. The Spirit simply communicates to the believer the life of God in Christ as nourishment *without* having to relate or move the believer or Christ as located *spatially*:

Heaven is not a spatially distant place. ‘Heaven’ is not identical with any ‘place’ in space and time. Rather, Calvin’s theology of the ascent of the believers in the Supper indicates how the ‘heavenly’ body is made available on earth.<sup>127</sup>

For Calvin a serious wrong is done to the Holy Spirit, unless we believe that it is through his incomprehensible power that we come to partake of Christ’s flesh and blood<sup>128</sup>: “For as to his communicating himself to us, that is effected through the secret virtue of his Holy Spirit, which

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<sup>124</sup> For more see Billings, *Union with Christ*, p. 31.

<sup>125</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 138.

<sup>126</sup> Evans, p. 23.

<sup>127</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 138.

<sup>128</sup> *Institutes* 4.17.33

cannot merely bring together, but join in one, things that are separated by distance of place, and far remote.”<sup>129</sup>

Billings argues that the best way to understand Calvin’s theology here is to instead use the category of transcendence as a lens to read the ‘distance’ between the believer on earth and Christ’s risen ascended body at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly places.<sup>130</sup> *This* is the ‘distance’ that is “overcome only by the work of the Spirit.”<sup>131</sup> Christ’s body is thus not ‘contained’ by the elements to be consumed by the believer but *given* by means of the Spirit to the believer for transformative and life-giving purpose: “By ‘spiritual’, Calvin does not mean that the believer’s communion with Christ is somehow less than true and actual. Rather, the communion is accomplished by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>132</sup>

Even though it seems unbelievable that Christ’s flesh, separated from us by such great distance, penetrates to us, so that it becomes our food, let us remember how far the secret power of the Holy Spirit towers above all our senses, and how foolish it is to wish to measure his immeasurableness by our measure. What, then, our mind does not comprehend, let faith conceive: that the Spirit truly unites things separated in space.

(4.17.10)

This Union with Christ through partaking in the Lord’s Supper is ultimately a “mystery” and “by nature incomprehensible”. We receive the life of Christ through true partaking in his flesh by the power of the Spirit, who raises us up in faith to the ascended Christ, uniting us to him. We receive the divine life through his flesh into our own by the secret power of the Spirit. The

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<sup>129</sup> Comm. 1 Corinthians 11:24.

<sup>130</sup> It is primarily a “metaphysical rather than a spatial distance” Billings, p. 138, fn. 127.

<sup>131</sup> Billings, p. 139.

<sup>132</sup> Evans. p. 22.

purpose of the sacrament is to ‘image’ this reality “in visible signs best adapted to our small capacity”. (4.17.9).

All of this complexity as to the precise nature of the presence of Christ in the sacrament points to the truth of what scholars<sup>133</sup> are beginning to conclude: that what mattered most to Calvin was not the ‘how’ but the ‘what’ of sacramental encounter. A key text here is from the 1536 Institutes:

Inquisitive persons have wanted to define how the body of Christ is present in the bread. Some, to display their subtlety, added to the simplicity of scripture that he is present really and substantially. Others wanted to go farther, saying he is present in the same dimensions in which he hung on the cross. Others devised the monstrosity of transubstantiation. Some said the bread itself was the body; some that the body was within or under the bread; some that the bread was only a sign and figure of the body.... But the primary question to be put was how the body of Christ as it was given for us, became ours; and how the blood, as it was shed for us, became ours. What matters is how we possess the whole Christ crucified, to become partakers of all his blessings.<sup>134</sup>

In summary, the sacrament, like preaching, enabled Union with Christ to be actualized in the life of the believer. The Supper was a means by which the *whole* of Christ, by means of the Spirit, could be present and available. The sacrament was a means by which participation in the life of Christ, in the life of the Triune God, was assured.

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<sup>133</sup> For example, Wallace. pp. 197-216; McDonnell. p. 177f.; M. Eugene Osterhaven, "Eating and Drinking Christ: The Lord's Supper as an Act of Worship in the Theology and Practice of Calvin," *Reformed Review* 37, no. 2 (1984). pp. 83-93. s

<sup>134</sup> Calvin, *CO* 1.139



#### 4.2. *The theme of ascent*

As we have seen in the above discussion, the doctrine of the Ascension was crucial for Calvin in his sacramental outlook. A crucial text from Calvin is that from his Letter to Peter Martyr, 8 August 1555<sup>135</sup>:

For although the faithful come into this Communion [*koinonia*] on the very first day of their calling; nevertheless, inasmuch as the life of Christ increases in them, He daily offers Himself to be enjoyed by them. This is the communion [*koinonia*] which they receive in the Sacred Supper.

The sacraments facilitate for Calvin an *increase* in the believer of the life of Christ by the agency of the Spirit. This ‘increase’ is the ‘ascension’ of the believer united to Christ, as hinted at in 4.1.5:

Believers have no greater help than public worship, for by it God raises his own folk upward step by step... As if it were not in God’s power somehow to come down to us, in order to be near us, yet without changing place or confining us to earthly means; but rather by these to bear us up as if in chariots to his heavenly glory, a glory that fills all things with its immeasurableness and even surpasses the heavens in height! (4.1.5)

In fact, Canlis argues, the Eucharist is “Calvin’s doctrine of participation worked out to its furthest end.”<sup>136</sup> The sacraments, for Calvin acting as ‘steps of a ladder’<sup>137</sup> that lead us to the

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<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 238.

<sup>136</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 161.

<sup>137</sup> Calvin’s Sermon on 2 Samuel 6.1-7 cited in Canlis, p. 238.

whole of Christ. The motif of ‘Ascent’ acts therefore as “Calvin’s antidote to Eucharistic idolatry”<sup>138</sup>. There can be no sense of: “pull[ing God] down from his throne; for his Majesty must be brought into subjection to us, if we would have him to be regulated according to our fancy.”<sup>139</sup>

For Calvin, the sacraments then were part of God’s first gracious movement towards us *enabling* our communion with him; God’s descent that has enabled our ascent. Calvin’s Pneumatology thus enabled a strong commitment to the reality of divine presence in the sacrament whilst not violating the integrity of created matter by insisting on a change to its substance.<sup>140</sup> The role of the Spirit therefore is to lift us up to participation in Christ where our reality is perfected: “Christ’s descent (his participation in our situation) is the condition for our ascent”<sup>141</sup>:

This is also why the holy table is made ready for us, so that we may know that our Lord Jesus, having descended here below and having emptied Himself of everything, was not, however, separated from us when He ascended into His glory in heaven. But rather it is on this condition that we are sharers of His body and His blood.<sup>142</sup>

Christ has participated in our situation (descent) so we can participate in his (ascent). His body is not brought ‘down’ to us now to enter our reality (that has already happened at the Incarnation for Calvin) but rather we are ‘taken up’ by the Spirit’s agency into God’s reality.

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<sup>138</sup> Canlis, p.127: “Calvin saw with piercing clarity that an exclusive focus on the descent of Christ resulted in stultified views of the Christian life, usually construed ontologically, sacramentally, or ethically.” Cf. p. 128: “If humanity is related to Christ through grace rather than by Trinitarian participation in Christ, “the elements threatened to substitute for *koinonia*”.

<sup>139</sup> Comm. Gen 2:9; Ps 84.3 cited in Canlis p.160. Cf. 3.2.6 – “breaking him into pieces”.

<sup>140</sup> See Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 240.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p. 163.

<sup>142</sup> Sermon on Luke 2.1-14 in Canlis, p. 162.

Canlis helpfully quotes Douglas Farrow here: “It is *we* who require Eucharistic relocation.”<sup>143</sup> The importance of this move is that Calvin utterly protects God’s primacy and sovereignty – He is the one in control of our participation and enjoyment of Christ at the Eucharist, not in any way the believer. The sacrament is thus “a transforming event for creaturely reality... to be brought into *koinonia* with the triune God is an ontologically shattering event.”<sup>144</sup> Christ manifests the Spirit in that moment to make effective that which the sacrament signifies. (4.17.10). The Spirit, through the human partaking of the activity of the sacrament, enables us to be ‘lifted up’ and enter the “eschatological reality of Christ.”<sup>145</sup>

#### **4.3. Divine accommodation**

Since, however, this mystery of Christ’s secret Union with the devout is by nature incomprehensible, he shows its figure and image in visible signs best adapted to our small capacity. Indeed, by giving guarantees and tokens he makes it as certain for us as if we had seen it with our own eyes. (4.17.1)

Calvin talks of the sacraments using the patristic notion of ‘divine accommodation’<sup>146</sup>, holding together both the mystery of God and yet the possibility of knowledge of God, to explain such sacramental perspective. In his correspondence with Westphal, he writes that the sacraments are “in accommodation to our weakness, to raise us upward toward himself.”<sup>147</sup> Signs on earth

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<sup>143</sup> Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, p. 177.

<sup>144</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 163.

<sup>145</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 165.

<sup>146</sup> His engagement with patristics included especially John Chrysostom and Augustine (see Billings, *Union with Christ*, p. 74; cf. “Calvin was attempting to retrieve the essentially Catholic concern for the incomprehensibility of God, as well as to avoid projecting the creaturely onto God through literal interpretations of anthropomorphisms.” p. 75.

<sup>147</sup> Calvin, *TT* 2:428.

such as the sacraments are to be understood as divine aids to human experiencing of grace.<sup>148</sup> They direct faith towards Christ's saving reality in heaven – his human flesh which channels the *duplex gratia* of divine salvation by means of the Spirit. The elements as 'symbols' act to 'invite us to him', lifting up our 'eyes and minds' (4.17.18).

Moreover, Calvin uses the notion of accommodation to preserve again the notion of God's immanence yet held within a foundational divine transcendence. Billings writes: "divine transcendence and immanence do not point in opposite directions; they are not principles to be 'balanced' by a golden mean. Rather in the matrix of accommodation, emphasizing transcendence makes God's closeness and intimacy with us possible."<sup>149</sup> Calvin is thus able to hold the radical participation of Union with Christ in the context of divine incomprehensibility. Through the doctrine of accommodation these don't have to be opposites.<sup>150</sup>

In the light of this notion of Accommodation, encounter with the presence of the risen Christ by the Spirit in worship is therefore best understood as occurring within, "the heavenly place of the earthly church".<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 139.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 69.

<sup>150</sup> For more on Accommodation in Calvin's thought see *ibid*, p. 70f. Also, Jon Balserak, *Divinity Compromised : A Study of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin*, Studies in Early Modern Religious Reforms (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).

<sup>151</sup> Billings, p. 140.

#### **4.4. Prayer**

Prayer is a “communion of men with God” (3.20.2) – “not so much for his sake as for ours” (3.20.3). It is a place where doctrine becomes lived - where believers ‘learn it by heart’ (3.20.1).<sup>152</sup> It is an activity that is, again, totally Spirit dependent. (3.20.1,4).

In prayer we see the need for Christ and we receive Christ, for Christ is ‘the pledge and guarantee of our adoption’ (3.20.37). It is in prayer that the believer sees the need to “go outside himself” (3.20.1) because “he lacks all aids to salvation.” We recognize that “whatever we need and whatever we lack is in God”. In prayer “a wondrous exchange takes place when one receives the revelation of Christ by faith.”<sup>153</sup> Calvin writes:

In Christ he [the ‘Lord’] offers all happiness in place of our misery, all wealth in place of our neediness; in him he opens to us the heavenly treasures that our whole faith may contemplate his beloved Son, our whole expectation depend upon him, and our whole hope cleave to and rest in him. (3.20.1)

This receiving of Christ is a participation in the fullness of the Father placed in Christ, “so that we may all draw from it as from an overflowing spring.” (3.20.1). In summary, Calvin states, “in short, it is by prayer that we call him to reveal himself as wholly present to us.” (3.20.2).

Calvin ensures to mention it is by the Spirit that this prayer relationship of adoption and communion occurs:

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<sup>152</sup> See *Institutes* 3.6.4: “[doctrine] must enter our heart and pass into our daily living, and so transform us into itself that it may not be unfruitful for us.”

<sup>153</sup> Billings, p. 110.

The Spirit of adoption, who seals the witness of the gospel in our hearts [Rom 8:16], raises up our spirits to dare show forth to God their desire, to stir up unspeakable groanings [Rom 8:26], and confidently cry, “Abba! Father!” [Rom 8:15]. (3.20.1).

It is this experience of adoption that brings an ‘extraordinary peace and repose to our consciences’ (3.20.2) and results in gratitude. In fact, as Billings points out, it is such an important practice for Calvin as it removes the sin of ingratitude (3.20.14, 19, 28, 41; 4.20.3) and the sin of anxiety that may be due to an uneasy conscience: “our prayers depend upon no merit of ours, but their whole worth and hope of fulfilment are grounded in God’s promises, and depend upon them.” (3.20.14).

Prayer is thus a way the believer experiences the wondrous exchange of God’s *duplex gratia* in Union with Christ. The believer *has been* forgiven, is adopted, and *is being* transformed. Prayer is, as Billings notes, thus a ‘dynamic movement’ out of the old self and into the new identity of being a child of the Father through being united to Christ by the Spirit<sup>154</sup>.

#### **4.5. Summary**

From this brief survey it can be seen that the understanding of divine-human relationship as Union with Christ had a significant foundational role in Calvin’s theology of both prayer and sacrament. Both practices of the church are “Trinitarian-structured experience”<sup>155</sup> of participating in the life of God by increasingly receiving the ‘whole’ of Christ by means of the Spirit. This extraordinary possibility is a ‘kind’ of deification in that “Calvin pushes the limits

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<sup>154</sup> “.... In giving up hope in oneself and putting all of this hope in Christ, the ‘overflowing fountain’, one is formed by the Spirit into the image of Christ.” Ibid, p. 116.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p. 110.

of biblical language in seeking to express the closeness of the Union between believers, Christ and God.”<sup>156</sup>

Sacramental elements are “God’ instruments” (4.14.12) to be used by the Spirit. Indeed, the sacraments are gifts from God (his ‘accommodation’) as an aid to our need for physical signs of God’s presence.<sup>157</sup> Calvin states that therefore neither our confidence nor God’s glory should be ‘transferred’ to them: “Rather, laying aside all things, both our faith and our confession ought to rise up to him who is the author of the sacraments and of all things.” (4.14.12) There is no power in the elements themselves (4.14.16) – but only when God chooses to “sustain, nourish, confirm, and increase our faith” (4.14.7) by giving Christ to the believer by the Spirit (4.14.17).

Receiving the elements, by faith and in the agency of the Spirit is thus part of the believers’ experience of the adoption into the Father’s family though Union with Christ by the Spirit in the shape of the *duplex gratia*. As through prayer, partaking of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper results in both receiving free pardon *and* offering a thankful response of gratitude (4.17.2). Sacramental worship and prayer are thus participatory activities whereby the believer ‘ascends’ with Christ through faith and thus is transformed by the Spirit from a life lived in the first Adam to a life newly lived in Christ through the paradigm of soteriology as the *duplex gratia*.

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<sup>156</sup> Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification." p. 332.

<sup>157</sup> Billings, *Union With Christ*, p. 25.

## 5. Conclusions

Over the course of these two chapters, we have attempted to be as accurate as possible in describing some of the key facets of Calvin's understanding of the divine-human relationship as Union with Christ. We have looked at Calvin's own work, and drawn from recent works of retrieval that are seeking to be historically sensitive such as Billings, Canlis and Butin.

We have seen how Calvin took 'participation' out of its platonic and medieval context and redefined it in a Trinitarian frame based on his reading of the economy of God in salvation. Participation became therefore a term that can bring together various disparate doctrines, in particular Creation, Incarnation and Ascension. Participation brings together Christology and Pneumatology in a thoroughgoing Trinitarian framework. Calvin's theology therefore paves the way for an understanding of divine-human relations that has no need for philosophical or Platonic grounding. We have also seen how Calvin was not misanthropic but actually held something akin to a traditional Catholic view of humanity made in the *imago dei* but post-fall in bondage to sin if living in separation from Christ.

Each commentator has their own distinct emphases in reading Calvin's Union with Christ. For Billings it is the *duplex gratia* that takes centre stage. Articulating clearly Calvin's understanding of how justification and sanctification work together in the believers' Union with Christ becomes key for Billings. For Canlis it is the motif of ascent, the theme of adoption, and the 'spiritual' aspect of participation which leads her to see Calvin as a pioneer of a theology of mediation which emphasises the Pneumatological lens to understanding God's presence.



Before we move on to our more constructive work bringing Calvin's Union with Christ into dialogue with P-C worship, we will briefly summarise the outlines of Calvin's notion of participation and the divine-human relationship.

Firstly, the gift of grace that is, for Calvin, Trinitarian adoption through Union with Christ by the Spirit, is ultimately a gift of relationship. It is the Trinitarian activity of God to restore relationship with fallen humanity. God has descended to his Creation, so Creation can ascend to God. The cross is the nexus for this synthesis of descent and ascent. We can ascend because Christ has ascended. It is something both natural to our design as humanity in the *imago dei* but also utterly 'unnatural'<sup>158</sup>, hence the need for the Cross.

The sacraments and prayer are gifts from God – his own 'divine accommodation' – in order to aid believers' participation in God; their engrafting into the Triune life through Union with Christ by the Spirit. The realm of the Spirit, where the physical is taken up in the ascended body of Christ is the great unifier of the 'spiritual' and the 'physical', elements and 'presence'. Divine presence understood as 'ascent', is not a move away from the material but further into it.<sup>159</sup> The Spirit brings us not just the benefits of Christ therefore but the very person of Christ – the 'eschatological reality of Christ'.<sup>160</sup> This engrafting and intimacy or *koinonia* is both vertical and horizontal with the ecclesial body of Christ<sup>161</sup>.

The sacraments, as moments of 'visible grace', do not have any power in and of themselves but only by the Spirit, a position that mirrors Calvin's view of humanity itself. The Spirit

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<sup>158</sup> Canlis, p. 93.

<sup>159</sup> Canlis, p. 54.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, p. 165.

<sup>161</sup> "We cannot love Christ without loving him in the brethren." (Comm. on 1 Cor 10.16). Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*.

overcomes this ‘distance’ between Creator and Creation but it is a distance not of spatial significance but of the transcendence and ‘otherness’ of God himself. The Spirit enables the believer to participate in the Triune life and receive all the gifts of God the Father through Union with Christ and the experience of the wondrous exchange of the double grace of justification and sanctification. The human is present in the Triune life of God through being placed *in Christ*.

Calvin’s theology of participation thus holds together several facets of the divine-human relationship that can often be held apart. It addresses the problem of human sin and the fundamental difference between humanity and the divine, but crucially contextualizes this problem in the greater narrative of the goodness of Creation and God’s saving activity with the world. It is a theology that is both *Christocentric* and *Spirit-dependent* in its articulation of the possibility of humanity’s incorporation into and enjoyment of the divine life through being declared forgiven and through the ongoing process of transformation. It is fundamentally a Trinitarian theology in its insistence on the revelation of the Father’s mercy and kindness occurring through the believers’ experience of the wondrous exchange. Moreover, the Father is the source of the gifts humanity receives through Union with Christ *and* the source of the ways such grace is made visible through the ‘accommodations’ of prayer and sacrament.

In his emphasis on the *duplex gratia*, Calvin builds a theology of divine-human relationship that doesn’t merely focus on the Cross but includes out of necessity the great doctrines of Ascension and Pentecost – the very means by which we can unite with Christ by the Spirit. This allows Calvin to speak in terms of ‘deification’ – an extreme intimacy with God whilst not denying the reality of what Billings labels as the “less fashionable themes” of human sin

and the substitutionary suffering of Christ on the cross.<sup>162</sup> Instead, it is an intimacy which holds the tension between sin and glory, between cross and Pentecost, Christ and the Spirit.

Participation is thus rooted in the biblical witness to Christ rather than any medieval mysticism or platonic notions. Participation is humanity participating in Christ's response to the Father. It is no escape from Creation, as a mystical Union with God may suggest, but Union precisely *as* Creation. Communion with God is built into the very foundations of the world through Christ as mediator. There is no general participation of Creation in the divine, but only the specific participation of Creation in Christ. Creation is held by Calvin in both a pneumatological and Christocentric framework and so relationship between human and divine has been Trinitarian from the start. Participation is humanity's return to God and inclusion in the life of God.<sup>163</sup> God himself is the *telos* of humanity – the goal of 'ascent' being communion with God.

Calvin offers a notion of Union therefore that takes up both patristic and medieval notions of participation but 'radically recontextualised',<sup>164</sup> It is a theology that espouses not just imitation of Christ but Union with Christ. A Union which results in 'a type of interpenetration'<sup>165</sup> of the human *in Christ* and the Father and the Spirit<sup>166</sup>. Creator and Creation thus exist in a 'differentiated Union' – extreme intimacy where distinction is preserved by the mediation of the Spirit. Calvin's sacramental theology, in essence, is a refuting of any attempt to reduce the believer's Union with Christ to anything less than this extreme relationality.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 196.

<sup>163</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 53.

<sup>164</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 196.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95.

<sup>166</sup> Butin here excels in his work on the perichoretic Trinitarian nature of Calvin's framework for divine-human relations. For example: "while the second person of the Trinity is the mediator *per se*, the full work of divine redemption involves the perichoretically unified operation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Butin, p. 52.

<sup>167</sup> See Evans, p. 23 for more on this: "it is apparent that Calvin has in mind a relationship of great intimacy."

Moreover, it is a participation and Union with God that is always ‘eschatologically conditioned’<sup>168</sup>. The *telos* of the Christian life and in fact, all of Creation, is to be reunited with God through Union with Christ by the Spirit, but crucially, “the eschaton is not collapsed into the present, and sinners are not said to be perfected in this life.”<sup>169</sup>. It is to be experienced *now*, in the ‘heavenly’ place that is the church, but also it is to be fully completed *then* in the final eschaton. Billings states: “Union with God [therefore] is not only the eschatological end, but a paradigmatic feature of the God-human relationship.”<sup>170</sup>

Finally, against the criticisms of the ‘gift theologians’ and others, Calvin’s theology of participation is not one of unilateral gift which undermines any possibility of human agency in the divine-human relationship. Instead it is a Trinitarian adoption that allows space for response and encourages voluntary gratitude from the believer. The believer is activated by the Spirit and their particularity is preserved by the Spirit. Human participation in the divine is far from an impersonal Union of the ‘soul in the divine’ as in some medieval mystic notions, but a Union of the human person, in the person of Christ by the person of the Spirit.

Calvin thus re-establishes the location of human reality as growing from, growing through and growing to divine reality.<sup>171</sup> There is thus for Calvin no actual independent life. Life is defined as being in communion with God by participating in Christ by the Spirit. This is a dynamic and eschatological anthropology where ‘identities are not diminished but enhanced’<sup>172</sup>. God himself is the goal of human life (3.24.10) and communion with God by participation in Christ

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<sup>168</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 196.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid; cf. p. 42.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>171</sup> See Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 160 for or more on this.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

is “the goal and means of the Christian life”<sup>173</sup>. This is the ‘dependent anthropology’ that emerges from Calvin’s notion of Union with Christ by the Spirit.

Now we can begin the work of applying these insights to the area of P-C worship. What does Calvin’s understanding of divine-human relationship centred on Union with Christ offer us as a resource to ground P-C experience and critique P-C praxis? Does Calvin’s exposition of ‘Trinitarian-structured experience’ offer a form of ‘plausibility shelter’ to P-C worship’s notion of personal dynamic encounter? Moreover, how does Calvin’s theology of participation challenge or redefine P-C worship’s notion of intimacy?

My hope is that this fresh articulation of Calvin’s theology can speak into and form a foundation for a constructive work building a creative theology for P-C worship: a Reformed perspective which will fund an articulation of the deeper logic or grammar of P-C worship. In turn, perhaps P-C worship as, in a sense, ‘sacramental prayer’ and ‘divine accommodation’ can help express as ‘grace made visible’ Calvin’s soteriology and pneumatology. Can we end up even towards a Reformed P-C theology of Christian worship *per se*? A Reformed-Charismatic *Ontology*?

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

## Chapter 8: Constructing a Theology for P-C Worship Using Union With Christ

### 1. Introduction

The lack of discussion around how Union with Christ can speak into areas of contemporary church life such as worship has been a “missed opportunity” according to Billings.<sup>1</sup> If Union with Christ is a core facet of New Testament teaching on Christian identity it has implications for not only the witness but also the worship of the church.<sup>2</sup> It is not merely a topic for academic debates about Reformed nuances of the doctrine of justification<sup>3</sup>, but a dynamic relevant theme for today’s church.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter – where we apply Union with Christ to P-C worship - is thus part of freeing the doctrine from often ‘confessional’ treatments of Calvin, where his work has been read and interpreted by those already committed to his (perceived) theological agenda. Such treatments, whilst being valuable for those within present day Reformed faith communities, often have limitations when it comes to being free from prior commitments to ‘the general worldview of Calvinism’<sup>5</sup>. They suffer in the ability to speak therefore across tradition or to form the foundations for a wider more Catholic-Reformed theology of divine-human relations in worship.

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<sup>1</sup> There are ‘multifaceted implications’ of the doctrine for the contemporary academy and ecclesial contexts. See Billings, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> If we don’t take seriously the ‘in Christ’ motif we miss the heart of the Christian message.” Billings, *Union With Christ*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Garcia. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, *Union with Christ : The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998). Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier, *Justification : What's at Stake in the Current Debates* (Downers Grove, Ill. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, Apollos, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> It is a theological paradigm that “reframes part of our theology” – especially in areas where perhaps God is made “too small and predictable, too close, or too distant.” Billings, *Union*, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> See Butin, p. 3 for more.

At the other extreme, historical-critical studies of Calvin try and find an objectivity free from prior commitment and therefore end up questioning the validity of any synthesis or unifying approach to Calvin's thought. However, following the path suggested by Billings, Canlis and Butin, I hope in this chapter to boldly and creatively appropriate the tradition to build a creative constructive theology for today<sup>6</sup>. This chapter will begin to outline a theology for P-C worship, utilizing the insights from the previous two chapters. As Billings argues, different traditions have their own 'distinctive gifts' but also their own 'distinctive blind spots'<sup>7</sup>. By retrieving a Reformed doctrine of Union with Christ and letting it speak into the contemporary horizon of P-C worship, I hope to illuminate these blind spots whilst deepening the clarity and weight of the distinct gift of P-C worship to the wider tradition.

My hope is that this dialogue will open new avenues for exploration in P-C theology by unveiling alternative perspectives and insights through the lens of a Reformed notion of participation in God. I expect Calvin to act as a critique to the contemporary world and to function as an outside voice to establish a deeper grammar and logic for P-C praxis.<sup>8</sup> Thus, as Calvin used participation through Union with Christ to frame prayer, sacraments and the Christian life<sup>9</sup>, I will do so now with sung worship. How does his theology compare and contrast to key facets of the operative theology of contemporary P-C worship? Can Calvin's notion of participation hold together Pneumatology and Christology, reframing P-C worship's

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 5. In part, my study is inspired by the pioneering spirit expressed here by Butin: "My hope is that my effort here will encourage others to attempt what a few years ago was regarded in certain critical academic circles as impermissible (i.e., to make constitutive systematic-theological use of the thinking of historical figures far removed from our own time and place)."

<sup>7</sup> Billings, *Union*, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, as Billings notes, there may be "claims that contemporary readers are right to reject" as we engage with Calvin from a Pentecostal-Charismatic perspective: "Theologians of retrieval can benefit from a historical distance that allows them to see the idolatries of another age and better discern what to accept or reject from biblical interpreters and theologians in earlier eras in history." p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Chapter 3 of the Institutes was incorporated into a separate small booklet to address these areas: *The golden book of the true Christian life*.

epiclesis in a Christological frame? Do these two ostensibly very different traditions have the potential when brought together to speak more broadly into the nature of Christian worship itself?

## **2. Christocentric: dynamic mediation on a Trinitarian basis**

First and foremost, two key elements have emerged from our immersion in Calvin's theology that can be used as anchors to a constructive theology for P-C worship: a Christocentricity that places the human, ascended Christ at the heart of the divine-human relationship, alongside a Pneumatocentric dependency for human participation in the divine life through Union with Christ. Together, these elements form a distinct and dynamic understanding of the mediation that must be a cornerstone to P-C worship theology.<sup>10</sup>

### ***2.1. The ascended Christ as mediator***

As we saw in chapter 4, P-C worship has been criticised as suggestive of some kind of 'mystical' unmediated Union with the divine. Stackhouse, for example, claimed that there had been a "collapse of the theological notion of mediation"<sup>11</sup>. This is a concern that others share - judging the experience of divine presence claimed by worshippers in P-C praxis to be merely a gnostic escapist experience. Such a critique of P-C worship is understandable when the shorthand self-articulation of the movement is 'worship in the Spirit'. Such a Spirit-centric articulation of praxis suggests a pneumatocentric philosophy of mediation that at best

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<sup>10</sup> A simple definition of mediation is covered by Cumin: "a way of asking how God might be other than the world in a way that does not mean he is indistinguishable from it." Cumin, p. xi. For further discussion see the excellent, Thomas F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology*, The Richard Lectures for 1978-79, University of Virginia (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1980).

<sup>11</sup> Stackhouse, p. 127.



minimises the Son's role in divine-human ongoing relations, or at worst results in a *binatarian* sub-Christian notion of God.

In this informal philosophy of mediation, the Spirit is the means by which divine and human realms come together. This is a form of spiritual immediacy in danger of being too detached from any Christological root, ultimately incomplete in failing to emphasise the unique and essential person of Christ as (risen human) mediator, besides worshipping (divine) Christ as King.

Perhaps therefore the most significant contribution Calvin's work makes to the construction of a normative theology for P-C worship is the emphatic emphasis on Christ *and* the Spirit as crucial mediators of human participation in the divine life. The notion of Calvin's 'participation' ensures that 'worship in the spirit' is simultaneously Christocentric. By stressing Christ's *continuing* humanity as much as his divinity, Calvin paves the way for a dynamic Trinitarian notion of mediation, upholding the crucial mediatorial role of both Son and Spirit.

Calvin's whole premise of human participation in the divine life is founded on an incredibly strong theology of mediation through Christ. Not only is Christ's ascended body the ultimate materiality that mediates the presence of God for humanity<sup>12</sup> but it is only through Christ's descent and ascent, via the nexus of the Cross that human participation is made possible. Christ as mediator of the divine-human relationship is not just an incarnational/atonement theological move but part of Calvin's very doctrine of Creation. Thus, communion with God through Union with Christ becomes the basis and telos of Creation's existence.

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<sup>12</sup> See also, E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God* (Tenbury Wells: Fowler Wright Books Ltd., 1963).

Of course, not only is Christ mediator of Creation from the start but is also mediator of salvation at the cross. Even more significantly, the Spirit does not merely relate the human *back* to the cross but places the believer *presently* in the ascended Christ. As Evans notes, Calvin's work provides "the link again between the person and work of Christ – it's not just something done on the basis of the past but [the] ongoing work of Christ."<sup>13</sup>

This Christological key to any possibility of divine-human communion enables the grounding of P-C Spirit experiences in a robust theology of Christo-centric mediation. This is particularly needed where traditional sacramental worship has been replaced or minimised by P-C worship in mainline churches, as has been noted by Pete Ward and others<sup>14</sup>. Eucharistic worship intrinsically promotes and protects the Christological key to Christian divine-human relationality. With only songs, music and lyric, and with such turnover of songs week by week, year by year, P-C worship has not such a reliable means of communicating or symbolising the centrality of Christ's mediatorial role as great high priest. As we saw in chapters 3 and 4, P-C language is very much orientated towards 'God' and the 'Spirit' rather than 'Christ', thus the danger of an informal theology, forming in the hearts and minds of P-C worshippers, that would espouse a form of gnostic escapist understanding of communion with God, is a very real one. The nature of God communicated by P-C worship praxis could easily be a binitarian divine being consisting of Spirit and Father – or perhaps more starkly, 'God' and 'God's Spirit' who is needed to mediate the divine-human relationship. Worship 'in the spirit' by its very self-articulation diminishes the Christocentric necessity of *Christian* worship. Anything else would

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<sup>13</sup> Evans, p. 264.

<sup>14</sup> As we saw in Chapters 3 and 4.

be entirely false as a witness to the Christian orthodox faith of a triune being, Father, Son and Holy Spirit as revealed in Scripture and articulated in Creed.

## ***2.2. P-C worship as a ‘virtual presence’?***

This danger can be illustrated by reference briefly to 17<sup>th</sup> Century federal theology. Many Puritans in the generation following Calvin minimized the real or true presence of Christ in the sacrament due to their desire, as Holifield states, to “keep the Lord’s supper on exactly the same level as the Word”.<sup>15</sup> The result was, Evans notes, “Calvin’s view of Union with the humanity of Christ as an instrument in the application of redemption largely disappears.”<sup>16</sup> On this perspective, the humanity of Christ becomes minimized to history, rather than a crucial feature of present reality.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the doctrine of the ascension is brought into question as being necessary for holding such a theology of divine-human relationship in worship.<sup>18</sup>

The result of such a deviation by the Puritans away from Calvin’s Christological key to the presence of God in the Eucharist was, what Evans terms, a “virtual presence” view of the sacramental encounter.<sup>19</sup> In such a view, the Holy Spirit becomes known as merely representing Christ rather than actually *mediating* the risen Christ.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, for Calvin, the double grace is all contained in and by Union with Christ. There is no separation as such of Christ’s person and work. Justification and Sanctification are united in Christ.

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<sup>15</sup> E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 126.

<sup>16</sup> Evans, p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> Evans calls it “little more than...a necessary precondition for the atonement.” p. 83. This overlooking of the humanity of Christ is also found in Barth’s revisionist Calvinism. Barth so stresses the divinity of Christ that there is a diminishing of the centrality of the humanity of Christ for mediation. (See p. 212f, Colin E. Gunton and Paul Brazier, *The Barth Lectures* (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> As later Schliermacher holds. See Gunton, *The Barth Lectures*, p. 206.

<sup>19</sup> Evans, p. 81.

<sup>20</sup> Evans summarises thus: “the Holy Spirit functions as a surrogate for an absent Christ instead of mediating a personal presence.” Evans, p. 83.

As we have so clearly seen in the previous chapter, for Calvin, the domain of the Spirit is the life of the believer *in* Christ and the life of Christ *in* the believer. Evans posits that this was the error of Federal theology and the consequent move towards formulating a linear order of salvation experience (*ordo salutis*), separating the double grace and thus ultimately the Son and the Spirit's work in divine-human relations.

Thus, P-C worship that lacks in emphasis this Christological key to mediation (in particular the role the humanity of Christ plays in redemption) shares in this Puritan error of espousing a 'virtual presence'. Such a distorted theology of mediation would validate criticisms of P-C worship that align it with gnosticism. In contrast, Union with Christ ensures that any move towards more of Christ by the Spirit is a move further *into* Creation not away from it.

Such a view of 'virtual presence' would place P-C worship in further danger of a more individualistic mystical encounter focus. The Christological key provided by Calvin's work is so crucial in ensuring that, in Canlis language, the 'rungs' of the ladder of ascent are Christ<sup>21</sup>, who is the 'beginning, middle and end'<sup>22</sup> of our P-C 'encounter' with God. We can *only* participate in the life of God in Christ because *He* has participated in our life. We can only 'ascend' because he has descended to us.

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<sup>21</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> Calvin's commentary on Col. 1:12 (1548) Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*.

### 2.3. P-C worship as ‘sanctification applied’?

So, in the light of Calvin’s theology of Union with Christ, could P-C worship be essentially understood as ‘sanctification applied’?

The *ordo salutis* adaption of Calvin’s theology emerged in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century with the consequence of an effective separation of the *duplex gratia*. Justification and Sanctification became part of a sequential trajectory in the life of the believer – a series of “successive and discrete acts” rather than the one movement of Union with Christ.<sup>23</sup> If too firm a distinction is made between the first extrinsic ‘legal’ Union imputed to the believer (justification) and the ongoing spiritual Union by the agency of the Spirit (sanctification) then the possibility of a theology or praxis emerging principally promoting one aspect of Union is likely. P-C worship, with its particular emphasis on the manifestations of the presence of God as the Holy Spirit, is particularly in danger of being merely *sanctification applied* rather than ‘soteriology applied’ – a more holistic Union of ongoing participation in justification *and* sanctification.

This critique is supported by commentators who, as we have seen in chapter 4, suggest P-C worship is an expansion of the availability of the Pentecostal experience of spirit baptism<sup>24</sup>. Similarly, in an Anglican context, (which has baptism so sacramentally and ecclesologically

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<sup>23</sup> Evans, p. 81; cf. p. 82: “By the mid-seventeenth century... as the theme of *unio Christi* was thus accommodated to the *ordo salutis*, the principle of unity binding justification and sanctification together become purely formal, and the organic unity of salvation was obscured.”

<sup>24</sup> Some have argued that the Spirit Baptism doctrine is a consequence of the separate stage *ordo salutis* of the holiness origins of Pentecostalism – i.e., that it is essentially the sanctification element. See Melvin Dieter, *Nineteenth-Century Holiness Revival*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1998). Macchia, using Dieter, identifies the work of Wesley’s associate, John Fletcher as advocating a distinction between regeneration (baptism) and sanctification – see p. 31, Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit : A Global Pentecostal Theology*. Pentecostal scholars such as Laurance Wood (*The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism: Rediscovering John Fletcher as John Wesley’s Vindicator and Designated Successor*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2002) have since argued for this as a form of Pentecostal-pietist *ordo salutis* which assigns these stages to person of the Trinity: Creation – the Father, Redemption – the Son, Sanctification – the Spirit. However, as Macchia rightly point out, “this internalisation can eclipse the mutual working of Christ and the Spirit in salvation history, while it overlooks the overlapping nature of soteriological categories in the New Testament.” p. 31.

central) Donald Dayton argues P-C worship functions as a recurring spirit-baptism<sup>25</sup> for believers. He suggests P-C worship leaves, “breathing room’ for the *experience* of Spirit baptism to occur later in the Christian life”.<sup>26</sup> The danger, however, is that again, P-C worship communicates a mode of encounter that is ultimately a binitarian expression of faith which diminishes the Christological key to mediation so central to Calvin’s work.<sup>27</sup>

Calvin’s Union with Christ thus acts as a powerful corrective to the dangers of the instinct of P-C worship praxis. P-C worship is in danger of adopting more of an ‘ordo salutis’ model of soteriological application to the life of the worshipper. Union with Christ, as Evans argues, “preserve(s) the integrity and necessity of both justification and sanctification”<sup>28</sup> being found together in Christ and can be a *continual mode* of the Christian life.

#### **2.4. P-C worship as ‘soteriology applied’**

In P-C worship this stress on the Spirit can easily fall into a dualism between the physical and spiritual. The songs, in this philosophy, become the means by which the physical is ‘escaped’ in order to attain a ‘higher’ spiritual or transcendent encounter. The humanity of Christ thus becomes treated, as it did for some of the Puritans, merely as an object of devotion or an ethical life to imitate.<sup>29</sup> Calvin’s work instead preserves the humanity of Christ theologically as an essential pre-requisite, and present day means, by which true encounter and intimacy with God is possible; the incarnate, now-ascended, vicarious humanity of Christ.

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<sup>25</sup> For discussion of Spirit Baptism as a central distinctive of Pentecostalism see Macchia, pp. 19-60.

<sup>26</sup> Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> “The separation of Spirit baptism from God’s redemptive work in Christ can also end up detaching the spiritual life from Christological guidance.” Macchia, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Evans, p. 262.

<sup>29</sup> See Joathan Jong-Chun Won, "Communion with Christ: An Exposition and Comparison of the Doctrine of Union and Communion with Christ in Calvin and the English Puritans" (Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989).

Here we see the importance of Billing's insistence on maintaining the adjective 'substantial' for divine presence rather than replacing it entirely, as Canlis does, with 'spiritual'. 'Substantial' preserves a theological insistence on the mediating role of the humanity of Christ, without which the conception of God's presence moves towards the 'virtual presence' of the Puritans. This is a presence "not of substance, but of the "virtue", or power and effects, of Christ's work."<sup>30</sup> Later scholars of Calvin such as the 19<sup>th</sup> Century German theologian John Nevin, who was writing against the federal theological separation of the *duplex gratia* saw this danger clearly: "the communion in question is not simply with Christ in his *divine nature* separately taken, or with the *Holy Ghost* as the representative of his presence in the world."<sup>31</sup> Union instead, as we have discussed, is movement towards the *whole* of Christ – person and work, humanity and divinity, justification and sanctification. The substantial Union between believer and the risen humanity of Christ is the means by which "salvation in its fullness"<sup>32</sup> is actualised for humanity.

We can now see that the personal encounter experienced in P-C worship should thus be understood as *soteriology applied*; the whole of Christ for the whole of humanity. The double grace actualised in human life.

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<sup>30</sup> Evans, p. 79.

<sup>31</sup> John Williamson Nevin, *The Mystical Presence; or, a Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (Phila. 1846). p. 63.

<sup>32</sup> Evans, p. 81.

## ***2.5. P-C worship experience as spiritual union of our humanity with the humanity of Christ***

For Calvin, the presence of God as the double grace experienced through Union with Christ, comes through spiritual Union of the human with the humanity of Christ.<sup>33</sup> Encounter with God for Calvin was this radical notion of the finite participating in infinite (the life of Trinity) by *means* of the infinite (the Spirit) being placed *in* the finite (the humanity of the risen, ascended Christ).<sup>34</sup> Here, E.D Willis summarises brilliantly the sharpness of the Calvin position:

Reformed theology has been pilloried for refusing to recognise the capacity of the finite for the infinite. Here Reformed Christology asserts that this is but one fact; the other is the capacity of the infinite for the finite. In other words, can the infinite be related to the finite in a way not destructive to the finite?... the majesty of the humanity of Christ consisted in the very fact that it remained finite and creaturely even when hypostatically joined to the infinite creator.<sup>35</sup>

This ‘majesty’ of Christ’s humanity thus has a crucial role in preserving the ‘majesty’ of P-C worship. If adopted fully as a foundation, such a prescriptive theology could protect P-C worship from some of the charges we saw in previous chapters of seeking mere emotional experientialism. As Billings himself notes: “no part of human identity goes untouched by Union

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<sup>33</sup> It is noteworthy that Barth in his theology of mediation misses this - despite being so reliant on Calvin. Gunton notes the almost total absence of the letter to the Hebrews on Barth’s horizon whereas, with its central focus on the humanity of Christ, for Calvin it was such a central text. See Gunton, *The Barth Lectures*, p. 213.

<sup>34</sup> See Evans, p. 79, fn. 128.

<sup>35</sup> Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology : The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*. p. 18. Cited in Evans, p. 79.



with Christ”<sup>36</sup>. A theology of Christo-centric mediation, where the humanity of Christ plays such a key role, prohibits any dualistic anthropologies.

Union with Christ, experienced in P-C worship, is a reality that impacts the whole of the human. P-C worship is a potential location of the deepest mystery: the beautiful exchange – our sin-bound humanity for His ascended humanity. Such an event may well trigger emotion but emotion is a sign of a goal far bigger being actualised - the restoration of our original design - rather than the end goal in and of itself.

## **2.6. Summary**

In summary, P-C worship praxis would suggest there is *one* means by which ‘redemption is applied’<sup>37</sup>: the activity of the Holy Spirit upon, within, and amongst the people as they sing. Instead, Calvin’s understanding of the divine-human relationship insists theologically that there are *two* means: the work of the Spirit *and* the risen humanity of Christ. This is a key component of constructing a theology for P-C worship. As we saw argued by some in Chapter 4, P-C praxis inevitably leads to at best confusion around, if not denial of, a truly Trinitarian theology of mediation.

Here Calvin’s work on Union with Christ provides crucial soil for P-C praxis to be planted resulting in a much-needed deeper and wider foundation for P-C theology. As Evans so well articulates: “Only as the concrete person of Christ is seen as the realization and source of all the benefits of salvation will the devotional and the dogmatic come together.”<sup>38</sup> Union with

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<sup>36</sup> Billings, *Union*, p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Evans, p. 78 uses this phrase.

<sup>38</sup> Evans, p. 266.

Christ provides a much-needed theology of mediation to act as a governor of praxis: a praxis that is in constant danger of communicating a Spirit-centric notion of mediation that, at best, minimises the Son's role in divine-human *ongoing* relations, *or* at worst results in a binatarian sub-Christian notion of God.

Ironically P-C worship is in danger of devaluing and undermining the very thing it places so central – the Holy Spirit. Without Calvin's Christological key to mediation acting as a check and balance, the Spirit actually becomes treated as less than divine: a being in-between God (Father) and the worshippers (the world) and used as a conduit to experience the 'divine' (God). The Spirit becomes merely the means by which the worshippers experience the divine, rather than the divine person who places us *in* Christ and thus relates us to the life of the Triune God of Christian witness. P-C worship can only claim experience of the 'divine' because one both fully divine and human exists: the ascended Christ. In him and through him, the Spirit relates the believer to the life of the Triune God. Mediation is something Christ simply *is* and the Spirit *does*.

### ***2.7. Example application: sacerdotalism***

A theology of mediation for P-C worship that is founded upon Union with Christ speaks to the role of human leadership and the handling of music in P-C worship. The major theological mistake that P-C worship can fall into is a minimizing of the need for and uniqueness of Christ. This can happen in two ways: firstly, by so emphasizing the role of the Spirit that all mediation of the life and presence of God seems to come through him alone. Or secondly, by bestowing in praxis a priestly (i.e. mediatorial) role upon the human leadership and/or music. This is a subtle form of the ancient danger of sacerdotalism – the temptation to over-reliance on the

priest or the elements of worship to be the prime agency in facilitating divine presence with (or, on behalf of) the people.

Union with Christ insists on the absolute uniqueness of God's descent to us in Christ, Christ's human obedience to the Cross, and his ascent as the Second Adam – in whom we now have life. Neither the very best leadership, nor the most beautiful music, can replicate or replace the person of the eternal Son – mediator of divine-human relationship from Creation, through salvation, and towards restoration.

Here it may be useful to use Aquinas's language of instrumentality and efficiency.<sup>39</sup> Human leadership, and the 'elements' of the music, are instrumental<sup>40</sup> to the encounter with God's grace that occurs in P-C worship, but crucially they must never be understood as being the 'efficient' or first causes. Calvin is so keen to emphasise that created elements in worship do not have 'some sort of secret powers'<sup>41</sup>: it is wrong "to think that a hidden power is joined and fastened to the sacraments by which they of themselves confer the graces of the Holy Spirit upon us as wine is given in a cup."<sup>42</sup> Prime causality is only attributable to the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup>

P-C worship leaders and their music play a more sacramental role in acting as signs of and signs to the invisible grace that is the reality of Union with Christ by the Spirit for the believer

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<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of Thomas see Schillebeeckx. pp. 82-89; cf. Colwell, p. 7f; cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Sacrament as Action, not Presence," in A. Loades & D. Brown (eds.), *Christ: The Sacramental Word: Incarnation, Sacrament and Poetry*, (London: SPCK, 1996).

<sup>40</sup> See Aquinas *S.T.* 3a, 62, 1: "An instrumental cause...acts not in virtue of its own forms but solely in virtue of the impetus imparted to it by the principal agent. Hence the effect has a likeness not to the instrument, but rather to that principal agent...[an 'instrument' is] in its true sense applied to that through which someone produces an effect." Cited in Wolterstorff, p. 108.

<sup>41</sup> *Institutes*, 4.14.14

<sup>42</sup> *Institutes*, 4.14.17

<sup>43</sup> Although, of course, they can be seen as signs of the sacred reality. See Aquinas *S.T.* 3.62,1 where Aquinas suggests instrumental causes *can* be a sign as they are an effect of the principal cause.

in worship. Human leaders are only therefore ‘priests’ by participating in the one true high priest, never truly mediating themselves but acting more as accommodated signs of God’s grace - a living sacrament for others to see and hear the double grace of Christ offered to them.

P-C worship itself is an *instrument* in the triune God’s hands. It is a personal instrument of God. It never possesses God’s presence, but acts as a means by which the people of God encounter the personal and experiential reality of God – Union with Christ by the Spirit.

### **3. Pneuma-dependent**

The person of Christ, in both his divinity and humanity, is key to the mediation of the divine-human relationship for Calvin, but as we have seen, there is no way for this to be effective other than through the agency of the Spirit for “...wherever the Spirit does not cast his light, all is darkness.” (2.2.21) It is to this theme we now turn.

#### ***3.1. Enabling the mediatory role of the risen Son***

The thoroughly ‘pneumatocentric’ approach to divine-human relations is a crucial distinctive to Calvin and is also, as we saw in chapters 3 and 4, the central motif of P-C worship. Both traditions can be said to prioritise what Canlis identifies as, ‘the pneumatological dimensions of presence’.<sup>44</sup> From Calvin’s work, we can say that experiencing the presence of God in worship is the believer participating in Christ by uniting with his risen ascended body. There is no spatial gap between the worshipper and ‘heaven’ but only a ‘Holy Spirit-mediated’ gap

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<sup>44</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 81.

between our humanity and his risen perfected humanity. The relation of the Son to both the worshipper and the Father by means of the Spirit is, Paul Cumin writes, “some kind of pneumatologically mediated perpetual event”.<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, Christology and Pneumatology are intrinsically linked for Calvin but in a way that emphasises the distinct personhood and function of each. Calvin’s synthesis of descent and ascent, based on the economy of God in salvation, clearly marks the Cross as the crucial nexus of human participation in God. However, Calvin also gives a crucial role to the Spirit, and warns of the dangers of devising a Christianity that has no need for the Spirit. The Spirit is both the ‘power’ and ‘efficacy’ of God’s saving work and relation to the world (1.13.9).<sup>46</sup> As Calvin writes: “[The] whole power of the gospel depends upon its being made life-giving to us by the grace of the Holy Spirit...”<sup>47</sup> Butin summarises thus:

If it may be willingly affirmed that, for Calvin, Trinitarian Christology is the decisive moment in the restoration of the divine-human relationship, then it must be immediately added that Pneumatology is that which connects the Trinitarian pattern of that relationship as it is focused in the redemptive work of God the Son with its dynamic Trinitarian actualization in and for the rest of humanity.<sup>48</sup>

Here then Calvin’s theology of the Spirit offers a major affirmation of P-C worship’s pneuma-centricity. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit is crucial in *enabling* (as a mediator himself) the mediating role of the Son.

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<sup>45</sup> Cumin, p. 206.

<sup>46</sup> Butin, p. 69. (In restoring the image of God through Union with Christ.)

<sup>47</sup> *Comm.* 2 Cor 3.18; cf. *Institutes* 1.15.5.

<sup>48</sup> Butin, p. 80.

### ***3.2. Presence is in the ‘key of the Spirit’: a personal and experiential reality***

In this regard, in both P-C worship and Calvin’s Union with Christ, the Spirit is indeed, what Canlis identifies as the ‘threshold’ to participation. There is no way to participate in the life of God than through participating in (and through) the humanity of Christ through (and in) the activity of the Spirit.

Canlis’s move to link Irenaeus’ Trinitarian analogy of the two hands with Calvin’s participation is very useful for articulating the personal and experiential dimensions of Creator/worshipper relationship<sup>49</sup>. Worship ‘in the Spirit’ is the way we participate in the triune divine life. Worship is addressed to the Father through the hand of the risen ascended Christ, but mediated by the hand of the Spirit, transforming our fallen humanity in Union with his risen one.

Because the Spirit is the way for our humanity to share in his risen ascended humanity, Pneumatology becomes a key framework for articulating the ‘true’ presence of the risen Son in the sacramental encounter for Calvin. Through looking at sacramental theology in a Trinitarian frame of Spirit-actualised participation through Union with Christ, Calvin moves the focus away from any notion of created matter in and of itself mediating divine presence. As we have seen, for Calvin that would be as “no slight insult” to the Spirit (4.17.33). Rather any notion of the presence of God in Christ with humanity is now in the ‘key of the Spirit’; it has been “transposed”<sup>50</sup>.

This theological turn is of huge significance for contemporary church horizons. It demands a major stress in any worship praxis on the need for the person and agency of the Spirit to be

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<sup>49</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 244.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 117.

present and working, in, upon and amongst the people as they gather to worship. Of course, in traditional Eucharistic worship the spoken *epiclesis* ensures such an orientation. P-C worship, however, at the very centre of its 'world-view' places a Spirit-dependency right at the heart of praxis, not only a dependency but a firm expectation of Spirit leadership of the gathered worship. P-C worship, in its form, displays something close to the Eastern theology of the church existing in a 'perpetual epiclesis'.<sup>51</sup>

### ***3.3. Emphasis on efficacy of the Spirit in encounter***

Again, it is useful to look at this 'instinct' of P-C worship contrasted with the Puritans' adaptation of Calvin's theology. Like P-C worship, the Puritans stress was on subjectivity.<sup>52</sup> However, their stress for efficacy of the sacrament was, as Evans observes, on *faith* more than the essential agency of the Spirit *per se*.<sup>53</sup> The famous Puritan, John Owen, for example, refers to the "faith of the believer" bringing "all the spiritual change" in the elements of Eucharist after the blessing, rather than any role of the Spirit's efficiency.<sup>54</sup>

Against this background, P-C worship similarly stresses subjectivity, but it is a subjectivity lifted off the shoulders of the subject and onto the unique and absolutely necessary work of the Spirit. Such pneumatocentricity in and of itself would be, as we have seen, dangerously binitarian or dualistic but once held in tension, and held to account, by Calvin's Christo-centric view of mediation, can incubate a rich and promising theology to offer the wider church.

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<sup>51</sup> Nikos A Nissiotis, "Worship, Eucharist, and 'Intercommunion': An Orthodox Reflection," *Studia Liturgica* 2 (1963).

<sup>52</sup> Evans, p. 79.

<sup>53</sup> Holifield, p.131. The Westminster Confession "omitted specific mention of the Holy Spirit's activity in its paragraphs on the Lord's Supper." See Evans, p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> Evans, p. 79.

### 3.4. Conclusion

The danger for P-C worship in so emphasizing the Spirit's mediating role is in neglecting the key Christological centre of divine-human relationality. As Stackhouse argues:

Authentic Charismatic-Evangelical spirituality requires a Pneumatology that reciprocates with Christology, but in a movement preoccupied with the peculiarities of Spirit manifestation this mutual dependency is severed, leading to a situation where, to use the Irenaean image of the two hands of God – Christ and the Spirit - the one hand does not know what the other is doing.<sup>55</sup>

In a similar vein, Catholic scholar, Yves Congar, writes, “[there is] no Christology without Pneumatology and no Pneumatology without Christology”<sup>56</sup>

A rare balance between the two is displayed in Calvin's theology, but how is it to be established and sustained in P-C praxis? Overt lyrical Christocentric content is one essential in every 'block' of P-C worship, but such content must be careful too, not purely focusing on the victorious, divine 'King Jesus' at the neglect of any mention of his past, present and future *ongoing* humanity. The Cross narrative does often feature in P-C songs, but that focus on Christ in his humanity needs to be expanded to include more of his *ascended* mediatory capacity.

If the *epiclesis* that is P-C worship is not framed enough Christologically it becomes closer and closer to the trap Calvin saw Osiander fall into: an experience of the divine by a variation of a theology of infusion of righteousness - that God somehow pours some of his substance into our

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<sup>55</sup> Stackhouse, p. 167.

<sup>56</sup> Yves Congar, *Word and the Spirit*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), p. 1.



substance. True Christian worship, however, in the power of the Holy Spirit, unites the believer to the journey of Christ, announcing the free pardon of God (justification), and moving the believer closer and closer in Union with Christ (sanctification), thereby receiving the life of Christ, adoption into and participation in the Triune life of God.

The challenge for P-C worship is that the form does not suit carrying the weight of this theological responsibility. Being a primarily oral liturgy, it is never permanent, forever changing, orientated towards the ‘new’ and, being a ‘singing-centric’ movement, easily driven by aesthetic choices of music more than theological concerns. P-C worship cannot *reliably* be Christo-centric as much as it is so naturally pneumatocentric.

Perhaps this is where P-C worship embedded within mainline churches (as, for example, the Anglican church in the UK) has a distinct advantage, a form of theological ‘protection’. In such contexts, P-C worship can be grounded much more easily in Christological frameworks by being an augmentation to, rather than a replacement of, sacramental worship. Moreover, the use of liturgy, such as the current Anglican Book of Common Worship, provides historically rich narrative frameworks which often excel at emphasizing precisely the repentance-forgiveness-righteousness (justification) aspects of the double grace. In turn, it can become true that, “what is offered [by P-C worship] is not an alternative to word and sacrament but a new life and power to both of these”.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hardy and Ford, *Jubilate*, p. 19.

#### **4. Reshaping ‘intimacy’: Trinitarian participation**

The doctrine of participation in God through Union with Christ is above all else a Trinitarian theological move.<sup>58</sup> Union With Christ has to be understood within this Trinitarian context in order to be correctly harnessed as a central motif of Calvin’s thought: “Calvin’s broader Trinitarian framework is what lends theological depth and perspective to all that he says about Christ and Union with him.”<sup>59</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, it was the biblical witness of the economy of God in salvation that Calvin took as the basis for his theology of Union with Christ and proceeded to work from.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Butin argues, Calvin “articulated a distinctive and heretofore largely unnoticed apprehension of the practical implications of the Trinity for the divine-human relationship.”<sup>61</sup> Even where such a framework has been recognised by commentators, Butin argues that “the actual implications for divine-human relationship, worship and belief haven’t always been addressed.”<sup>62</sup> Here we look at some of the key implications of this Trinitarian framework – both Christo-centric and Pneumatocentric – for the P-C understanding of ‘intimacy’.

##### ***4.1. Intimacy framed by difference***

Calvin’s articulation of the divine-human relationship as one of Trinitarian Participation, both Christo-centric and Pneuma-dependent provides a theological validity to P-C worship claims of extreme intimacy in the divine-human relationship. Yet, such a theology of participation also insists on retaining the orthodox ‘gap’ between God and the world, preventing either from

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<sup>58</sup> It is “irreducibly Trinitarian in all its dimensions” Butin, p. 127.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Cf. Willis. pp. 120-33, 152-54.

<sup>60</sup> Butin. p. 6; Cf. p. 124.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 6; cf. p. 19.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 21 fn. 82.

collapsing into the other. This intimacy framed by difference is a crucial affirmation and governor for P-C worship praxis.

The necessity of the Spirit's power and efficacy in relating the worshipper to Christ is the crucial component to the unique relationship. Only by emphasizing the Spirit's role in *mediating the mediator* can an understanding of extreme divine-human intimacy be espoused which maintains the difference between the two parties. The Spirit allows each to remain separate whilst facilitating, and indeed being, the location of creaturely participation in the divine (P-C 'intimacy'). As we have seen, the Spirit is the "agent of particularity...relating things even as he keeps them separate."<sup>63</sup> Intimacy is thus "not marked by assimilation and fusion, but by difference and particularity."<sup>64</sup> Within His realm, the uniqueness of both God and worshipper are preserved.

Calvin's work thus provides a crucial governing theology for P-C articulations of intimacy in worship. There *is* an intimacy here, and it is personal, but Calvin's work prevents any construction of intimacy that doesn't also contain an awareness of the inherent *difference* between the two parties. His doctrine of God, sin, and soteriology enforces an intimacy based on difference. Canlis is so helpful in reminding us that what we are dealing with is "the extremities of relationship – extreme communion with God and extreme differentiation from him"<sup>65</sup>.

This is a crucial correction to P-C worship language and philosophy. Human experience of the presence of God in P-C worship is perhaps not best served by utilising romantic terms,

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<sup>63</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, p. 246.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 245.

comparing divine-human relations to human romantic *two-person* relationship. ‘Intimacy’ is the enjoyment of the reality of being united *to* Christ as opposed to just moving closer *towards* Christ whilst remaining *outside* of Christ. Moreover, ‘intimacy’ is a P-C way of articulating the truth of the reality of being placed into Trinitarian relation in Christ by the Spirit. The reality of this experience may well be expressed using romantic language, but is a far wider, deeper, more significant relational event than such a metaphor of human relationship suggests. Calvin’s notion of Trinitarian Participation thus offers a much deeper and wider articulation of P-C worship’s notion of ‘intimacy’.

#### ***4.2. Intimacy as participation: the protection and fulfillment of particularity***

Participation includes the notion of ‘closeness’ to God, and the experience in the life of the believer of the presence and power of God, but transcends and expands such a notion with a far richer, wider, deeper theological frame. The experience of intimacy articulated in P-C worship praxis must never be seen as a kind of divine ‘takeover’ of the human. Calvin’s notion of participation helps clarify that an extreme closeness between the worshipper and God is possible but not one that involves the destruction of the human particularity. Rather, the language of participation communicates the potential for the full realization of created particularity in the agency of the Spirit, uniting the worshipper to the life and sonship of Christ<sup>66</sup>. Any work of the Spirit activates rather than diminishes the human<sup>67</sup>.

In P-C worship, the worshippers’ growth towards this original potential occurs by agency of the Spirit. As the Holy Spirit unites our humanity to the (ascended and resurrected) humanity

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<sup>66</sup> For more, see Billings, *United to God*, p. 327.

<sup>67</sup> Billings, *Union*, p. 43. Cf. Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 240.

of Christ, so he “activates our capacities”.<sup>68</sup> This ‘activation’ by the Spirit (deification of a ‘particular sort’<sup>69</sup>) lies at the heart of the instinct and praxis of P-C worship. Such worship truly can act to bring the worshipper into “an exciting new world”.<sup>70</sup> This new world is one of profound relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The goal of humanity becomes to live in the presence of the Triune Creator God who is sustaining and fulfilling the particularity and potential of his Creation. There is therefore, in P-C worship praxis, the possibility of a, “new en-Spirited human existence based on the ascended humanity of the Son”.<sup>71</sup> This ‘deification’ where the “fullest manifestation and final end” of humanity is possible, is a Spirit-activated, transformation of our beings<sup>72</sup> - resurrected Adams alive in the Second-Adam by the same *Ruach* of God.

The Spirit allows God to remain other, whilst his Creation can be restored, or, better, to use a Gunton term, *resurrected*<sup>73</sup> - pulled forward into its original design by sharing in the divine life, by the Spirit. Calvin thus offers a ‘pentecostal’ articulation of the new relationship that is open to the world in Christ by the Spirit. This is a participation not born from platonic or scholastic soil but firmly planted in, ultimately, Pneumatology. This is the ‘watershed’<sup>74</sup> role Calvin gave to the Spirit in his theology of human participation in the divine life, thus: “[It is not] mere external relationship. It is a present-tense activity in which humans, by the Spirit, are drawn into the life of the Son of God”.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Billings, *Union*, p. 46.

<sup>69</sup> Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification." p. 316; Cf. *Union*, p. 66 Cf. Mosser, *The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification*.

<sup>70</sup> Billings, *Union*, p. 174.

<sup>71</sup> Canlis, p. 247.

<sup>72</sup> Billings, "United to God through Christ: Assessing Calvin on the Question of Deification." pp. 327-328.

<sup>73</sup> See Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement : A Study of Metaphor, Rationality, and the Christian Tradition*.

<sup>74</sup> Canlis, p. 239.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

P-C worship in its pneumacentricity (and, in so far as it manages to maintain a Christocentric approach) thus becomes understood as a location of the fullness of God *and* the fullness of his Creation. It becomes an enchanted place of potential; a place of transformation – where everything becomes that which it was most designed to be. In this regard P-C worship “authorizes expansiveness” and is the “opening” of a space for enlargement as Hardy and Ford proposed in their early work on praise<sup>76</sup>. Participation in P-C worship is an entering into the land of the Spirit where the future is being brought into the present<sup>77</sup> and the past is being made perfect in the future. Worship is completion.

#### ***4.3. Intimacy as the increase of the life of Christ***

When read through this lens, the personal experience of the presence of God at the heart of P-C worship becomes understood as “the ‘increase’ that the church enjoys on its ascending journey”<sup>78</sup>. As we worship, there is a deepening of corporate joining, by the Spirit, to the ascended humanity of Christ. P-C worship foundations can be built on the acceptance of this constant offering of the life of Christ to the church by the Spirit. P-C worship acts as an intensification of the daily ‘increase’<sup>79</sup> of the life of Christ in the worshippers (more of this in our next chapter).

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<sup>76</sup> Hardy and Ford, p. 159.

<sup>77</sup> “If the Spirit is anything in the Bible, it is an eschatological gift (e.g., Ezek 39:10; Matt 12:28; Eph 1:13-14; Heb 6:5).” Macchia, p. 48. “Participation in God is participation in the eschatological freedom of the divine life in history to move all things toward new Creation.” Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Canlis, p. 238.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

The Spirit thus works our identity as ‘persons-in-Christ’ “deeper and deeper into the church’s consciousness”<sup>80</sup>. The Spirit “brings the being of God into the heart of the human person”.<sup>81</sup> The heights of personal experience of encounter and intimacy in P-C worship have to be seen within this overarching trajectory of humanity discovering its identity as it is restored to live more and more in *His* identity.

Although this journey in joining to the body of Christ does have personal (existential) impact, Canlis is right to emphasise the corporate shift in understanding intimacy, and the ‘journey of worship’ that Calvin’s participation brings: “Ascent is neither for the individual person nor for the disembodied soul, but is for the people of God.”<sup>82</sup> This acts to protect the P-C longing for intimacy in worship from an individualized ‘mystic’-tradition heuristic.

It also acts to redefine ‘ascent’ in articulations of P-C worship away from Old Testament Temple models and towards a more Trinitarian, personal, and New Testament understanding of presence as participation in Christ’s risen humanity. Ascent is not so much a pilgrimage *to* somewhere as a journey *in* receiving more of Christ’s life by the Holy Spirit. Ascent and intimacy have to also necessarily involve a recognition of, and a bringing into participation of, our own sin-bound state in order to become re-born in the life of the Spirit.

P-C worship is therefore a key component or mechanism of becoming fully human, Creation reaching its intended potential. In songs, space, musical interlude, openness to improvisation and the Spirit’s leadership, it acts as an invitation to the worshippers to be ‘re-humanised’<sup>83</sup>. P-

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<sup>80</sup> Canlis, p. 247.

<sup>81</sup> Alexandre Ganoczy, "Observations on Calvin's Trinitarian Doctrine of Grace," in Edward A. Dowey, Elsie Anne McKee, and Brian G. Armstrong (eds.), *Probing the Reformed Tradition : Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), p. 99.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Billings, *Union*, p. 11.

C worship is the enjoyment of our particularity by participating in the body of Christ in the playground of the Spirit.

Any notion of *Kenosis* (self-emptying) in worship needs to be qualified through this lens. Descent is not an individual journey but the communal journey each worshipper enters: the emptying of human Adamic sin by the world's joining with Christ's own descent on the cross. The P-C worshipper gets 'filled' not by getting empty, but by getting fuller – fuller of who they are in Christ, as the Spirit joins them to him and works his life into their lives.

P-C worship praxis, when anchored and expanded by Calvin's notion of participation thus can act as an antidote to the temptations of narcissistic, individualistic culture by revealing, in its spirit-emphasis, the folly of attempting to build and create "our own uniqueness"<sup>84</sup>. P-C worship, instead, invites an evacuating of autonomy, a surrender to the work of the Spirit which places us in the lordship of Christ, and the formational love of the Father.

#### ***4.4. Dynamic intimacy: the eschatological frame***

As we saw in chapter 4, P-C worship has been criticised for being individualistic due to its emphasis on personal experience. Commentators such as Steven bemoan the loss of the sense of the '*koinonia*' of the Spirit where "to come before God in public assembly was to realize that being in the presence of God meant discovering yourself in relation to others."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Canlis, p. 246.

<sup>85</sup> Steven, p. 256.



Again, Calvin's work both affirms and offers correction and a useful roadmap for P-C worship in this area. Intimacy with God is not simply a static place of 'arrival' or completion for the worshipper but actually part of a mode of living which is participating in the ongoing missional work of God in the world through Union with Christ by the Spirit. The Spirit unites the believer to the eschatological and restorative work of the risen Christ in the world to the glory of the Father. Union with Christ is thus not just participating in what Christ *has* done on the Cross but what he *continues* to do.<sup>86</sup> Any personal encounter with the risen Christ in P-C worship *is* therefore both an ecclesial encounter and a missional encounter.<sup>87</sup>

Singing places the self into the historic, present and future expansive move of the Trinity to restore all of Creation through Christ to its original design. This dynamic divine relational and missional space is actualized by the Spirit through singing. Worship thus draws the P-C believer into an eschatologically orientated worldview through placing them in the telos of the Trinity. P-C singing plays its part in the fulfilment of Creation's eschatological orientation brought about by increased relatedness to the Creator. Through singing the worshipper shares in the perichoretic relationship and mission of the Trinity.

Any articulation of encounter in P-C worship which suggests therefore a one-directional movement *in* towards God needs correction. The presence of God which the worshipper experiences in singing is the action and presence of the economic trinity. The singing believer is entering a dynamic, continuous, outward movement of God to and in his Creation. The telos of P-C sung worship is intimacy and, if the reality of intimacy is believers being placed in the

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<sup>86</sup> Peter Althouse in his study looking at P-C Worship as 'ritual play' through the lens of Victor Turner's notion of liminality, entitles his article: "Betwixt and Between the Cross and the Eschaton". See pp. 265-279.

<sup>87</sup> "The engrafting into the body of Christ is both mystical and horizontal, or social". See Billings, *United to God*, p. 330.

life of the Trinity, then the ultimate goal of sung worship in this eschaton is actually missional.<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, it is not only the Trinitarian frame that Calvin's work provides that orientates intimacy outward, but also the firm commitment to a Union not only with a 'spiritual' disembodied Christ, but with the vicarious agency of the *flesh* of Christ in his ascended reality. It is the *whole* of Christ that the worshipper receives and encounters in worship – vertical love of God cannot be separated from outward love for orphan, widow and neighbour. Billings writes: "to withhold the calling to justice from the new identity we receive in the gospel is to tear Christ apart – to seek to reject the second dimension of Union with Christ (sanctification) while holding to the first (justification)."<sup>89</sup>

This participation in the triune life of God at work in the world then is the context by which to understand the phenomenology of P-C worship. The gifts of the Spirit received, the freedom enjoyed, the 'expressive revolution' the tradition facilitates are all part of what the great writer on intimacy, St John of the Cross, called 'spiritual delicacies'. These manifestations of the work of the Spirit in P-C worship are not merely for the benefit of the worshipper but ultimately for the blessing of the world *through* the transformation of the believer in worship.

This outward orientated missional life is thus a natural and necessary corollary of personal Union with Christ. It is the sign of authentic participation in the Triune life of God. This missional impetus must stand then as a crucial governing standard over and, if necessary,

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<sup>88</sup> For more on this see: Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, 1st English-language ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994). pp. 331-41; Land; James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1979). pp. 225-26; "The Soteriological Spirit" Ch.14 in Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*.

<sup>89</sup> Billings, *Union With Christ*, p. 13; cf. *Institutes* 4.18.16.

against P-C worship. As we have seen, as a tradition P-C worship can be in danger of self-orientation<sup>90</sup> with a praxis that can ostensibly identify the Spirit's purpose in the therapeutic category<sup>91</sup> at the neglect of the missional, teleological category. P-C worship can all too easily collapse into the worship of worship, or an addiction to the experience of experience rather than the true worship of God which leads to the task of blessing and loving the world.<sup>92</sup> Worship is first and foremost not about the worshipper *per se*, but about God and the inclusion of his Creation to praise through adoption in Christ. Individual and corporate experience of Union with Christ is part of the bigger divine goal of re-Creation and restorative fulfillment of all of Creation.

Calvin's work opens up a pathway towards constructing a new spirituality that whilst acknowledging its 'therapeutic role' in the individual life simultaneously empowers and equips the worshipper for the outward movement of mission: "A new and concrete ecclesiology unfolds as we recognise that the pilgrimage of the individual Christian is ineluctably connected with the pilgrimage of other Christians through Union together with the life of Christ."<sup>93</sup> P-C worship can act as the place where this journey of the corporate and the individual in ascent with Christ is both constituted and sustained.

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<sup>90</sup> Although it is important to note that this is a danger for other worship traditions equally. For instance, in Hong Kong it is precisely the *communal* aspects of church that distinguishes the Filipino immigrant Charismatic Catholics from their non-Charismatic fellow Catholics. Their services continue on into lunch and often worshippers stay together in community all day on a Sunday. See unpublished paper by Connie Ho Yan Au, "Filipino Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Hong Kong: A History of Empowerment in a Foreign Land", Presented at Charismatic Renewal Conference, Wycliffe Hall Oxford, 14th September 2016., (Centre for Catholic Studies, Chinese Uni. of Hong Kong, 2016).

<sup>91</sup> This therapeutic individualism has been tracked by Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), and for example, Edward Farley, "The Modernist Element in Protestantism," *Theology Today* 47 (1990). pp.135-136; David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1993). pp. 137-186.

<sup>92</sup> Here Steven is right in his aspirations for P-C worship: "Worshiping in the Spirit should not be reduced to the intense personal mystical experience of a romanticized heart, but be a discovery of and celebration of the church, of being in community." p. 256.

<sup>93</sup> Evans, p. 266.

#### ***4.5. Summary***

Calvin's theology of participation, centred on Union with Christ, enables both extreme closeness between God and worshipper and a simultaneous preservation of difference. It is clear that P-C concepts of intimacy and divine immanence need to be based far more on a Trinitarian framework for divine-human relations, and specifically a Christocentric and Pneuma-dependent theology of mediation. True 'intimacy' is thus, not so much the narrower romantic one-on-one with Jesus as can be suggested by the P-C tradition, but a wider more robust Trinitarian participation. In worship we find ourselves flung into the very life, power, and love of the Holy Trinity. A relationship of transformation.

Calvin's Union with Christ offers just such a soteriology to P-C worship theology. However, such a soteriologically orientated grounding has to necessarily take into account Calvin's doctrine of sin and anthropology. It is to this that we now turn – what does Calvin's 'dependent anthropology' have to say to P-C worship?

### **5. The missing emphasis: the doctrine of sin and dependent anthropology**

#### ***5.1. The doctrine of sin***

Another area where Union with Christ brings both affirmation and simultaneously correction to P-C worship praxis is in the area of anthropology. Anthropology, and the associated topic of the doctrine of sin, is entirely missing in existing literature as an area of discussion in relation to P-C worship. By placing P-C worship in a Reformed perspective a much wider theological

horizon thus emerges which is crucial to inhabit in order to form a truly ‘systematic’ theology of the intimacy sought by P-C praxis.<sup>94</sup>

Calvin is clear that awareness of the utter poverty of our ‘bound to sin’ predicament orientates and compels us towards God in worship. For “our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God.” (1.1.1). It is an awareness of this “miserable ruin” – our sharing in Adamic rebellion and independence – that is underplayed, if not often totally absent from P-C praxis and theological discourse, which as we discussed in chapter 4 can “all too easily ‘pole-vault over Calvary on the way to Pentecost’ and ignore the problem of, and the solution to, sin.”<sup>95</sup>

Calvin’s work shows how a richer anthropology, which includes a doctrine of sin, is key to fostering and protecting spiritual hunger in the worshipper for the life of God. Moreover, it suggests that the experience of the life of God is not a luxury extra to the Christian life but an essential requirement for the life lived in Christ. The benefits of Christ, received in worship, are all to lead us back to the source, and *telos* of human existence – the Triune God himself: “by these benefits shed like dew from heaven upon us, we are led as by rivulets to the spring itself.” (1.1.1).

Calvin, as we have seen, places ‘knowledge of ourselves’ firmly in the primary context of our knowledge of God: “man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the Face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look unto himself” (1.1.2). Thomas Torrance develops Calvin’s work and is useful to reference here. For Torrance,

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<sup>94</sup> Proving correct Hardy and Ford’s assessment from over 30 years ago: “[a] systematic exposition of the nature of praise...leads to consideration of the basic topics of systematic theology...the nature of man, the nature of God, the Trinity, Creation, providence, sin and redemption...” Hardy and Ford, *Jubilate*, p. 153.

<sup>95</sup> Basden, *Exploring the Worship Spectrum*, p. 254.

“it is upon this downward motion of God’s grace that the very being of man is grounded.”<sup>96</sup>

Torrance’s application of this is key: “Therefore we must try to formulate a doctrine of man not by an activity which inverts the motion of grace but by an activity which responds to it.”<sup>97</sup>

This knowledge of ourselves, cemented into the foundation of God’s descent to us in Christ, becomes active and alive in simple response to the grace of God.

P-C worship acts as a container for the two essential elements to occur, from which the knowledge of ourselves (a person fulfilled in Union with Christ) is found. Firstly, the time of worship describes, orientates and invites the human to behold the ‘face of God’ in the descent of Christ. This is part of, for example, Wimber’s first two stages of the worship journey. The ‘call to worship’ and ‘engagement’ stages often contain within them language of ‘exaltation’ or ‘adoration’ – an invitation to focus on the revelation of God in Christ.

Secondly, as we have seen, P-C worship is an activity which at its very heart is about human participation and *response*. In the very act of responding through song, physical expression, and gifts of the Spirit, worshippers are responding in gratitude to the ‘downward motion of God’s grace’ that is Christ’s ‘descent’ to us and the nexus of the Cross. Thus P-C worship is an activity which is, in and of itself, an ‘ascent’ as singing joins us with Christ’s risen humanity. True knowledge of ourselves is activated in our singing response to the grace of God by means of the Spirit uniting us to Christ.

Torrance points out that, for Calvin, this worship response is something unique to humans amongst all Creation: “man’s true life consists in an intelligent motion in answer to the action

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<sup>96</sup> Torrance, "The Word of God and the Nature of Man." p. 99.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 100.

and Word of God's grace".<sup>98</sup> This is humanity's particular role to give thanks for God's gracious self-communication in Christ, to "devote himself entirely to knowing God, and mediating upon his perfections." (1.5.9; 1.14.21; Comm. on Acts 17.27<sup>99</sup>). It is only in this worship that we are most fully human – that which we were made to be. This, says Torrance, is the crucial application of Calvin's doctrine of anthropological dependence: "man has been made in such a way that he is not truly man except in the realization of his creaturely dependence on the grace of God, and that he cannot retain his life except in a motion of thankful acknowledgement of the sheer grace of God."<sup>100</sup> Indeed, this placing of anthropology in the context of thanksgiving for grace, is right at the heart of Calvin's theology and legacy, says Torrance: "Nothing is more characteristic of historic Reformed theology, and especially of John Calvin, than this overwhelming sense of the grace of God and *the note of unbounded thanksgiving* as the true life-answer of created man to the Father."<sup>101</sup>

This dynamic, totally dependent relationship of Creature to Creator, envisaged by Calvin, thus means there are only two directions humanity is at any one time ever moving in – towards God or away from him.<sup>102</sup> True Knowledge of ourselves cannot be cut adrift from the context, sustenance and maintenance of the Triune life. Moreover, it is participatory, response-fuelled, *worship* that sets the direction of humankind – either in an attempt at independence away from grace, or in a move further into dependence, alongside and within grace, united with the ascended Christ – Creation fulfilled in flesh. P-C worship thus can function, and be understood, as a vehicle for both the contemplation of the face of God but also realization of the dependent face of ourselves.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 100.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 102.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p. 110: "in a direction corresponding to the motion of grace, or in a direction hostile to it."

## ***5.2. P-C worship as an expression of, and facilitation of, a Spirit-dependent anthropology***

Worship thus functions in a crucial role. It places knowledge of ourselves – human weaknesses, capacities, gifts and orientation - in the right first context of knowledge of God. Worship lifts our eyes from fallen-ness to the face of God himself in Christ the mediator. Calvin warns: “As long as we do not look beyond the earth, being quite content with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue, we flatter ourselves...and fancy ourselves all but demigods.” (1.1.2) Worship saves us from the fundamental and foundational idolatry of displacing God with ourselves; of rejecting a dependency on him for knowledge (in Adam’s garden) in favour of gaining our own sources of knowledge about ourselves and our world. Worship acts to “raise our thoughts to God, and to ponder his nature, and how completely perfect are his righteousness, wisdom, and power – the straightedge to which we must be shaped.” (1.1.2) Worship acknowledges and defines our own limits as God’s creatures in his Creation whilst providing the pathway to maximizing our creatureliness in the “spring itself”. In worship, our dependent anthropology is revealed and in new-found humility it can receive God’s benefits in Christ “shed like dew from heaven upon us”. (1.1.1)

P-C Worship thus ultimately functions as a reversal of the fall by ascension with Christ by the Spirit.<sup>103</sup> Singing by and ‘in’ the Spirit (in Christ) is a movement back from independence to dependence. Crucially, it is not a movement we could ever make alone. It is only made possible by the triune activity of God in Creation – the descent and ascent of Christ and the enablement of our participation in his journey by means of the Spirit. Canlis states: “Calvin’s emphasis on creaturely frailty and sin is not to stress the distance from God but to stress that it is God who

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<sup>103</sup> See Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, pp. 53-88 for Canlis’ discussion of the doctrine of Creation as the foundation of Ascent in general.



takes the initiative with us – not we with him.”<sup>104</sup> This participation in ascension, which is gained through P-C worship, is our very created condition and orientation – “The proper condition of creatures is to keep close to God.”<sup>105</sup> Life thus is the “presence of God” and death is to be “without God”.<sup>106</sup>

Because this re-orientation and re-establishment of dependence is only possible by means of the Spirit, it is never something the worshipper can own, gain or keep. Through his anthropology and through his doctrine of Union with Christ, Calvin keeps the worshipper *permanently* dependent. This posture of dependence (the shape of a fully alive human) is one of the shared similarities between Calvin’s theology and the shape of P-C worship praxis. It is ‘spirit-dependent’ as a form of worship with its goal to be ‘Spirit-led’ – a human response to the activity of the Spirit amongst the people. As Calvin’s theology is *epicleptic* in character, so P-C worship is *epicleptic* in form.

Furthermore, by capitalising on the more ‘organic’ spiritual reading of Union (as opposed to a purely legal ‘substantial’ one), it is not primarily righteousness that is needed by the human in order to intimately relate to God, but the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who makes possible the human participation in Christ (3.1.2) *within which* righteousness and justification is given – the fulfilment of our anthropology. In this light, worship is a gift from God *for the infilling and continual re-filling of the human by the Holy Spirit*. It is one of the key processes by which our humanity is restored in right relationship with the Creator.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>105</sup> *Comm. Eph.* 1.10

<sup>106</sup> Calvin *Psychopannychia*, TT III p. 454. Cited in Canlis p. 74.

P-C worship is thus a key activity in which the need for the Spirit is expressed, the receptivity to the Spirit is heightened, and the participation in Christ by the Spirit is intensified. It is the place our dependent anthropology is voiced. Singing acts as both a sign and a fulfillment of that which it symbolizes – the human need for God’s activity by his Spirit, placing us in Christ, to fulfill and restore our very identity, purpose and affections.

Before continuing, it is important to note, however, that the ‘posture of dependency’ and ‘epicleptic form’, which I have claimed P-C inherently has, is constantly in danger of being lost in praxis. Here is where Calvin’s theology can be used not only to affirm but also to govern and critique.

### ***5.3. Excellence and presence***

Here in the UK in the last two decades, what began as a clear ‘Charismatic’ movement of worship within the Anglican mainstream has, through globalization, become more and more influenced by global (western) Pentecostal (capital ‘P’) worship praxis. These practices, particularly with a central value of ‘excellence’ (which has introduced extremely high production and musical performance values), have reversed on many levels the Quaker-originating ‘simplicity’ of Wimber’s Vineyard worship, as originally adapted by the Anglican church. As we saw in chapters 3 and 4, Wimber in particular distinguished Charismatic ‘vineyard’ worship from Pentecostal worship through values expressed in phrases such as ‘naturally supernatural’ by which he meant no hype in worship (through lighting, production and ‘theatre’ as he called it). Moreover, Wimber’s theological direction was entirely orientated towards participation by the congregation in worship – “the congregation is the choir” and “everyone gets to play” being two key values. Here then is a key tension for P-C worship in

the Anglican church today – in its adoption of capital ‘P’, Pentecostal values it is in danger of losing its posture of dependency and, to a degree, its *epicleptic* form, having more in common with the excellence of traditional, highly choreographed and conducted Cathedral worship than the spontaneity, simplicity and inclusivity of Charismatic worship 20/30 years ago.

If P-C worship loses its sense of Spirit-dependent anthropology it will lose its very distinction and collapse into the category we have discussed of the more general ‘contemporary’ worship. In such a scenario there is either no sense of any overt *need* for the Spirit in the worship, as the emphasis is on the music and the production elements performing as a kind of pseudo-Spirit – one who affects the emotional engagement of the human without being asked or acknowledged to activate a far more ‘substantial’ engagement of placing the worshipper in the ascended Christ. Or, equally, there is the mistaken belief that the agency of encounter, the means by which the ‘real presence’ of Christ is experienced by the worshippers, is purely the activity of the worship leaders, musicians and technical team rather than the ‘first cause’ of the Holy Spirit (the modern-day ‘sacerdotalism’ we have already discussed).

In this regard, it is easy to interpret P-C worship as promoting a modern form of *ex opera operantis* theology. The idea that in and of itself the music, arrangement and production make divine presence manifest in P-C singing. Wimber himself was fully aware of this danger:

There’s been a progression towards theatre... theatre presumes the ability to control audience interest... it eliminates the exercise of the unknown, taking of chances, reaching out for the something you’re not sure of, listening for the nuance of the Spirit’s breathing and speaking to you...it becomes safe.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> John Wimber, *Everybody Gets To Play*, (Boise, ID: Ampelon Publishing, 2009) Kindle edition location 2528.

James Torrance, following Leslie Newbigin, identifies this worship praxis as dangerously Unitarian – something that humans *do* without any reference to a divine agency: “in theological language, the only priesthood is our priesthood, the only offering our offering, the only intercessions our intercessions.”<sup>108</sup>

When corporate worship has a *goal* (which P-C worship does: encounter and intimacy), this temptation to ‘make something happen’ is a real and present danger. It can become a praxis, in this regard, Pelagian in nature – not taking into account the doctrine of sin and the influence of the fall on humanity’s inability to draw close to God. Moreover, in reference to the Christological key to mediation, such worship praxis can easily communicate the sense of human priesthood rather than total reliance on the uniqueness of Christ as eternal high priest in whom all human leadership participates and has its power.

P-C Worship should never be reduced to a human system as it is a participation in the divine life<sup>109</sup>. P-C worship *form* should not be viewed as a static deposit of the presence or power of God, but a dynamic participation of Creation in the grace-filled reality that is the risen humanity of Christ, relating us to the Father with the joy and agency of the Spirit. According to Barth, if divine revelation is in any way placed in human disposal it leads to “his allowing us to gain control over his Word, to fit it into our own designs and thus to shut up ourselves against him to our own ruin.”<sup>110</sup> This can be applied to P-C worship also: it must remain dependent on the

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<sup>108</sup> James Torrance, “The Doctrine of the Trinity in our Contemporary Situation” in I.C Alasdair (ed.), *The Forgotten Trinity: Volume 3, A Selection of Papers presented to the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today*, (London: Heron, 1991), pp. 3-17, p. 5.

<sup>109</sup> See Barth on this e.g., *CD* 1.1.139 on God’s word.

<sup>110</sup> Barth *CD* 1.1.139.

ongoing activity of the Spirit so that worshippers don't alienate themselves in a self-destructive orientation away from the very nourishment and Union needed to survive and thrive.

When united to Christ, by the Spirit, humans become restored to the 'upright posture',<sup>111</sup> fully alive in the life of God. This is an 'upright dependency',<sup>112</sup> total communion with God that makes us fully as we were intended to be: "Salvation is not partial communion with God and partial autonomy from God; insofar as it is salvation, it is divinely initiated communion with God all the way down."<sup>113</sup>

In this light, the 'presence' of God experienced by the worshipper theologically is never a temporary surface level experience but part of the re-ordering of the person's affections, decisions, and physicality as salvation is applied and resurrection is in process. It may be partial experience but it is total adoption. P-C worship is the process of communion with God 'all the way down'.

#### ***5.4. The question of reciprocity***

One final area of discussion around dependent anthropology and P-C worship is the question of reciprocity - so key in particular to Billings' work. If P-C worship is a participation in Christ's descent and ascent via the cross, made possible by the agency of the Spirit, is there any space for truly human response? Moreover, does such extreme closeness between the worshipper and God necessarily involve the destruction of the human particularity?

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<sup>111</sup> Billings, *Union with Christ*, p. 45. Cf. *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, p. 99.

<sup>112</sup> See Billings, *Union with Christ*, p. 60.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 170.

One of the most influential works on the theology of worship by James Torrance seems to suggest this to be the case: “Whatever else our faith is, it is a response to a response already made for us and continually being made for us in Christ, the pioneer of our faith”.<sup>114</sup> Torrance’s use of Calvin here suggests that our response is not really ours at all as it is a response *already made for us*. Torrance, reading Cyril, advocates that everything, including even the mediatory work of Christ, ‘flows from the Father’ and that Christ is the “offerer of all our worship to God.”<sup>115</sup>

He emphasises this point precisely in order to challenge such traditions as P-C contemporary worship. Such praxis is part of an ‘existential’ model of worship which is too ‘anthropologically centred’:

Although it stresses the God-humanward movement in Christ, the human-Godward movement is still ours...- *our* faith, *our* decisions, our response in an event theology which short circuits the vicarious humanity of Christ and belittles Union with Christ.<sup>116</sup>

This ‘event’ theology is the reduction of worship to a two-dimensional *present day* relationship between worshipper and God: “To reduce worship to this two-dimensional thing - God and ourselves, today - is to imply that God throws us back upon ourselves to make our response”<sup>117</sup>

For Torrance, God has already provided the response by means of Christ’s response. Contemporary worship forms, such as P-C worship, need to acknowledge far more, and be

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<sup>114</sup> James Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996). p. 18.

<sup>115</sup> See p. 44. That is what it means to pray and worship in the name of Jesus Christ - see ‘Mediator, High Priest and Advocate’ in T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 184.

<sup>116</sup> James Torrance, *Worship*, p. 18.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

rooted on, the *past* event of the Cross – the ultimate and complete place of worship – the obedience and passion of Christ for all of Creation.

The problem with such a view and application of Calvin for worship theology is firstly the misanthropic perspective it suggests, which as Billings and Canlis show, is not Calvin's intent. Secondly, it allows no space or possibility for true human response but is, when taken to its logical conclusion, merely God worshipping Godself through the conduit of His creatures. This is no truly reciprocal relationship and therefore no true intimacy or fellowship in the triune life can be possible. It seems to be a diminishment of any human agency in the worship response.

Moreover, thirdly, it is a prime example of an apparently orthodox (creedal) Trinitarian-framed Christo-centricity but which, in actual fact, diminishes the doctrines of Ascension and Pentecost and thus the distinct person and work of the third person of the Trinity. This is the pneumatocentricity that P-C has in its instinctual praxis and, as we have already discussed, Calvin's work so brilliantly emphasises and holds in tension with Christocentric mediation and Trinitarian theology.

The Spirit, in his person and work in uniting believers to Christ, is the space that allows the *full* participation and particularity of both God and the creature to co-exist in intimate relationship. Here is where a robust Pneumatology is needed precisely in order to hold together what would otherwise be an apparent contradictory statements:

- i) That God provides fully for our response in Christ's own response;
- ii) That we share in Christ's response by participating in his ascended humanity;

- iii) That our response nevertheless is truly *our own* – human agency located within divine agency: Spirit-dependent anthropology.

Calvin's reading, in dialogue with P-C praxis, brings a much stronger notion of an active worshipper, participating both physically and spiritually in the person, work and worship of Christ.<sup>118</sup> God's grace and our response are the two borders of this land of the Spirit. There becomes no need to favour one or the other in articulating the divine-human relationship. Our anthropology, when placed within this Christocentric Pneumatology, becomes at rest in the tension between boundedness to sin and nature being fulfilled in Union with Christ. Our sinful humanity is transformed by exchange with His risen humanity in the Spirit.<sup>119</sup> This is true human participation. Torrance seems to have a more restricted form of Pneumatology than Calvin himself had – a failure to emphasise the agency of particularity that the Spirit brings. The Spirit brings freedom to both divine and human poles of the relationship.

## **6. Conclusion: P-C worship as a participatory soteriology**

### ***6.1. Towards a Reformed-Pentecostal soteriology for P-C worship praxis***

Calvin's Union with Christ offers a historically-anchored, present continuous, future-anticipating soteriology for P-C worship. This is significant theological foundation to underpin P-C worship instinct. By viewing the double grace as distinct but inseparable parts of the whole that is found by being united to Christ, Calvin's notion of participation affirms a relational, organic (in being 'spiritual participation') and ongoing experience of soteriology (the crucified, risen and ascended life of Christ) in the life of the believer through worship.

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<sup>118</sup> See Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 202.

<sup>119</sup> See Billings, *Union with Christ*, p. 11 for more on this.



This development of a Reformed-Pentecostal *soteriology* for worship praxis is a much needed move. The lack of any notion of the soteriological dimensions of the Spirit's work lies central, for example, in some of Stackhouse's key criticisms of P-C worship which we saw in Chapter 4 (here focused on his contemporary concern the 'Toronto Blessing'):

The Toronto Blessing, in tying Spirit activity so closely to the notion of immediacy and to the cause of revival, has unwittingly weakened the integral place of the Holy Spirit in the *ordo salutis*, and moreover has contributed to the growing immaturity of the movement.<sup>120</sup>

For Stackhouse the irony of the P-C movement is that in pursuing the priority of the Spirit in worship praxis it has unwittingly lost a "vital pneumatological dimension".<sup>121</sup> Spirit phenomenology has replaced Spirit soteriology. By pursuing 'warm feelings' rather than maintaining the discipline of 'initiatory' sacramental rites such as Baptism, P-C worship has resulted in the marginalisation of the traditional soteriological aspect of the Spirit's work in order to give more emphasis to the vivifying, phenomenological aspects."<sup>122</sup>

Thus, according to Stackhouse, P-C worship has resulted in a 'romantic slant'<sup>123</sup> to Pneumatology away from its *raison d'être*: soteriology. This reveals the subtle but strong agenda of Stackhouse's critique: that any notion of having a soteriology of worship equates to traditional sacramental worship which, furthermore, by inference is apparently 'non-emotional' (and therefore superior). P-C worship when read through the lens of Calvin's

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<sup>120</sup> Stackhouse, p. 167.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p. 165.

<sup>122</sup> For discussion see Stackhouse, pp. 163-188.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p. 166.

theology of Union with Christ challenges such a narrow perspective by insisting that such experiential or ‘romantic’ feelings are signs of the believer’s very participation in Christ. An *ongoing* soteriological ‘event’ that is so radical, so far-reaching, that it is an implosion of divine life at the heart of our very humanity as God acts to re-form, re-create, and re-orientate our very beings. The experience of P-C worship phenomenology is the experience of being restored in right relationality, right direction, towards God through the Spirit-enabled participation in the upward ascent of the second Adam, the God-man Jesus Christ. This on-going breaking of our boundedness to sin is the historic work of the Trinity at the cross made present by being actualized in the life of the believer by means of the Spirit.

A soteriology of worship will have both one-off events (the sacrament of baptism being a prime unique example), and ongoing events that function in that sense ‘sacramentally’ – by which is meant an outward sign and gift from God by which believers can participate in the ‘true’ presence of the triune life of God. P-C sung worship is one such key ongoing way that the double grace is experienced and actualized in the life of the believer. If P-C worship can adapt this Reformed soteriology of Union with Christ, it will protect itself from being dismissed as a mere “striving after sentimental effect” which is “undermining of the gospel”<sup>124</sup>.

It is important to note here the subtle assumption made by those critical of the emotionalism and experiential emphasis of P-C worship, that the ‘gospel’ and true experiences of salvation should be ‘non-emotional’. Such a move is the fruit more of fear than faith and results in a rather diminished anthropology which collapses soteriology into purely epistemology; the human into the head. Stackhouse for example implies that true communion with God is about

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

“recalling the theological inheritance of the grace of God in Christ”,<sup>125</sup> yet Calvin’s vision of Union with Christ is far more than an intellectual remembrance of a past event. It is a dynamic, relational ‘true’ presence offered through the accommodations of God for believers to grow further in Christ: encounter ‘all the way down’.

It is clear then that Calvin’s double grace soteriology offers a much needed grounding for P-C worship to affirm its Spirit-centric instinct and yet deepen its pneumatological convictions. If adopted, such a theology will enable P-C worship to rebuff such criticisms as it being merely an “infantile romantic spirituality”<sup>126</sup>. It gives confidence to argue for the validity of seeing the believers’ experience of salvation as both one-off event *and* ongoing reception of grace. Rather than separating justification and sanctification as distinct parts of an *ordo salutis*, P-C worship in Reformed perspective can promote the possibility of an ongoing participation of Union with Christ – both ‘initial grace’ and ‘continual receiving’.<sup>127</sup>

P-C worship displays something more than the expressions of repentance and forgiveness associated with justification. It signals in its praxis a much broader theology of salvation which Calvin’s Union with Christ provides. It is salvation seen as the radical fulfilment of human desire and direction by sharing by the Spirit in the human, now ascended, life of Christ. It is salvation as resurrection. P-C phenomenology is the result of re-Creation occurring - dry bones coming to life. It is participation at the edge of reality – the Trinitarian mission of God to fulfil

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<sup>125</sup> Stackhouse, p. 58.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p. 167.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p. 169.

Creation in Christ by the Spirit.<sup>128</sup> Clark Pinnock writes, “Union with God is the unimaginable fulfillment of creaturely life, and the Spirit is effecting it in us.”<sup>129</sup>

## ***6.2. P-C worship as Union with Christ applied - a discussion with Torrance and Barth***

How precisely does Union with Christ become real or experienced in the life of the believer? This is one of the key questions that Calvin doesn’t fully answer, as Evans notes: “some explanation of the mechanism whereby the forensic may be mediated by a personal and ontological Union is needed. This Calvin did not provide.”<sup>130</sup> Two Calvin-influenced pivotal theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century can help us here: Karl Barth and Thomas Torrance.

With his wider concerns for objectivism and Calvin-influenced Christocentrism, Barth was nervous about allowing any sense of ‘mysticism’ to infect the theology of Union with Christ. He thus preferred to use language of ‘fellowship’ rather than ‘Union’ and language such as ‘confrontation’ rather than ‘encounter’ to describe the relationship between God in Christ and the believer<sup>131</sup>:

The relationship is always one of fellowship because, for all the intimacy and intensity of the connection between them, there can be no question of an identification of the

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<sup>128</sup> No wonder then that romantic and sexual imagery are used by those within the tradition, as human language is exhausted in trying to fully articulate this extreme closeness. Indeed, Paul’s argument for believers avoiding prostitution is precisely because they are already one with the Lord (1 Cor 6:15-19) and many times over the key metaphor for salvation (the restoration of our relationship with God) is that of male and female relations: (Eph 5:31; Rev 19:9; Rev 21:2, 9).

<sup>129</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love : A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996). p. 153.

<sup>130</sup> Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, p. 39.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, pp. 243-244.

follower with his preceding leader, the possession with its owner, or the life of the one awakened by the Holy Spirit with the One who gives him this Spirit.<sup>132</sup>

Whilst grasping the intensity of relationship between believer and Christ offered by Calvin's thinking, Barth ultimately shied away from its implications as a reality in the life of the believer. This is due to his failure to fully grasp the pneumatological dimension to Calvin's notion of Union which we have drawn out using Billings and Canlis' work. Commenting on Barth, Gunton concludes: Barth "loads too much on Christology at the expense of the third person of the Trinity... there is no doubt at all that [in Barth's work] the second person of the Trinity is made to do a bit more than he does in scripture."<sup>133</sup>

Barth seems to miss the key point we have drawn out from Calvin's work that it is the Spirit who *protects* and *promotes* the very particularity of both Christ and the believer. It is, to remind us, a Trinitarian-framed divine-human relationality which results in an intimacy based on difference (which also preserves difference). This is all possible solely by means of the Spirit's crucial mediating role working in tandem with Christ's mediation as High Priest and ascended God-man.

By failing to note the full weight of Calvin's pneumatological emphasis of the actualization of Union with Christ, Barth ends up leaving Union with Christ ultimately in the realm of objective comprehension for the believer<sup>134</sup> – a theology for the head not the human.<sup>135</sup> All of salvation

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<sup>132</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 13 vols. (T. & T. Clark, 1956-75). 4.3.2:539.

<sup>133</sup> Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement : A Study of Metaphor, Rationality, and the Christian Tradition*; Gunton and Brazier. p. 212.

<sup>134</sup> Although see, for example, Ingolf Dalferth's reading of Barth where knowledge of God *is* experience of God framed by eschatological realism. Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism," in Stephen Sykes (ed.), *Karl Barth : Centenary Essays*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>135</sup> There is a danger of oversimplifying Barth's complex and layered theology here. As Gunton rightly argues, it is wrong to call Barth's work a 'theology of Knowledge' – Barth is clear it is about knowing a person not facts,

- from divine initiative to human response – is contained in Union with Christ but remains seemingly in the realm of objective, epistemological grasp so that Christians can “know” and “declare what it is that belongs to them”<sup>136</sup>

The Scottish theologian Thomas Torrance notes this danger with Barth’s interpretation. Torrance picks up crucially on elements of Calvin’s theology of Union which Barth misses or deliberately overlooks – namely, the importance of some kind of *subjective application* of Union with Christ upon the believer. Union must be “subjectively actualized in us through his indwelling Spirit.”<sup>137</sup> For Torrance, this occurs through the sacramental life of the church gathered. It is an actualization that occurs “in ongoing history...in the midst of his Church”. It is the very ministry of Jesus continued, no less than the same “miraculous activity” done pre-ascension.<sup>138</sup>

This discussion is helpful in that it furthers the question of *how* we should understand Union with Christ occurring within church practices. Where Calvin did not make it clear or follow through the logic of his theology, we can now attempt to do so. Centre of our concern, of course is P-C worship praxis. P-C worship can be a crucial means by which the objective fact of Union with Christ in his ascended humanity is made real in the life of the believer. It can be considered a means of grace in that it is an activity in which the reality of God is actualized, in, and upon

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but nevertheless, Gunton argues, “it does have an abstract air, and it does overstress the past achievement and understress the present mediation of salvation through Christ in the Spirit.” Gunton, *The Barth Lectures*, p. 213.

<sup>136</sup> Barth. 4.1:92-93. Elsewhere he talks of the “knowledge of it” and that this knowledge is what defines a Christian from a non-Christian (4.1:103). For more on this objectivism surrounding soteriology see eg: Donald G. Bloesch, *The Christian Life and Salvation* (Grand Rapids,: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1967); G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, American ed. (Grand Rapids,: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1956). This is perhaps due to Barth’s failure to distinguish thoroughly between the resurrection and ascension. For discussion on this see, Gunton, *The Barth Lectures*, p. 206.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, Didsbury Lectures (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992). p. 77.

<sup>138</sup> Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1976). p. 149; Cf. p. 152 *Theology in Reconstruction* (S.C.M.Press, 1965). Union with Christ is thus enacted in the life of the believer through participating in worship – principally, for Torrance, in the Eucharist which he equates to “continuous participation in Christ...the Sacrament of sanctification. (see *Space, Time and Resurrection*, p. 150.

the life of believers, all of this by means of the Trinitarian-framed work of the Spirit and the Son as already discussed.

This application upon the believer of Union with Christ is not primarily about Barth's emphasis on the incarnational aspects of all humanity being engrafted into Christ. Rather it is distinctly powerful in being an actualization of the sharing of the believer in the ascended new reality of Christ as fully human, fully divine. It is the placing of the ascension doctrine so central that it makes a 'present' Christ possible (as opposed to a form of 'past' Christ as Schleiermacher).<sup>139</sup> Calvin's doctrine of Union with Christ, read through the nexus of descent-ascent makes this 'present' Christ possible. The work of the Spirit in P-C worship is an extraordinary moment of making real the sharing of our humanity in his – the freeing of our boundedness to sin, the ongoing reception of the double grace, the new location of our lives in adoption into the Trinitarian life.

This is not primarily therefore a move into 'knowledge' (as Barth) but into 'experience'. Something that Barth, to be balanced, could perhaps never have articulated due to his context but which when today spoken of in the context of Calvin's theology of Union with Christ can be reclaimed as a core part of human apprehension of, and participation *in*, divinity – indeed of the very Christian witness.

As we have already seen, such subjective actualization of Union with Christ frees a proper account of human response, an account that is grounded in the work of Christ, thus utterly Christocentric in the Calvin-Barth tradition, but also truly reciprocal due to the Spirit-enabled

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<sup>139</sup> Gunton notes how Schleiermacher, by failing to give enough weight to resurrection and ascension in his work, results in purely a "past Christ" who can only "mediate his influence through history through the Church". Gunton, *The Barth Lecture*, p. 206.

participation in the humanity of Christ. Thus Union with Christ applied in P-C worship is soteriology made *particular*. It is the ‘event’ of Christ made real in the life of the people gathered to worship – by means of the Spirit’s mediating agency: the subjective application of Union with Christ<sup>140</sup>.

### ***6.3. A challenge: how can substantial union occur by spiritual participation?***

Of course, there is an unanswered question remaining, as already hinted at in the previous chapter. How, in the context of P-C worship can a *substantial* Union occur with the humanity of Christ whilst being made possible by a *spiritual* participation?

Although it is clear that the believer’s Union with Christ occurs only by the agency of the Spirit, in *some way* Calvin does seem to suggest that Union must involve partaking of Christ’s ‘flesh’ and ‘blood’ (hence the accommodation of God in the sacramental elements): “Moreover, I am not satisfied with those persons who, recognizing that we have some communion with Christ, when they would show what it is, make us partakers of the Spirit only, omitting to mention of flesh and blood.” (4.17.7). Yet this ‘substantial’ presence is “inadequately explained” by Calvin and has “intrinsic conceptual difficulties”<sup>141</sup>. Indeed, in his letter to Peter Martyr, Calvin acknowledges, “How this happens far exceeds the limits of my understanding, I must confess; thus I have more of an impression of this mystery than I strive to comprehend it”.<sup>142</sup> In fact, as Tamburello points out, there are at least seven instances in the

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<sup>140</sup> Here the work of Ralph Del Colle resonates: “with respect to the notion of presence, the *Christus praesens* and the *Spirit praesens* cannot be simply identical... [the latter is] a presence that directs one to another, provid[ing] the possibility for the *Christus praesens* to be actualized.” *Christ and the Spirit*, p. 177.

<sup>141</sup> Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, p. 81.

<sup>142</sup> John Calvin, Letter to Peter Martyr, 8 Aug 1555, C.O.15:723



Institutes alone where Calvin uses *arcanus* or *incomprehensibilis* in reference to Union with Christ.<sup>143</sup>

Calvin seems to want to stress more the importance of *experiencing* Union with Christ in the life of the believer than *understanding* it: “Let us therefore labour more to feel Christ living in us, than to discover the nature of that communion.”<sup>144</sup> He seems at times to advocate avoiding at all costs philosophical speculation:

Therefore, if we find here any contradiction, and it puzzles us to wonder how it is possible that our Lord Jesus Christ who is in heaven should nourish us with his own substance, so that his body should be our meat and his blood our drink – I say if we fall into such fancies, we must repulse them all with what is said here, namely, that *it is a secret*, and we must rebuke our own folly and rashness in trying to measure what is infinite.<sup>145</sup>

Torrance too falters when it comes to explaining how this ‘real presence’ of Christ is present other than in the mystery of the Spirit’s work: “it is impossible for us to construe the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist in terms of anything we can analyse naturally in this world.”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> 2.12.7; 3.11.5; 4.17.1; 4.17.9; 4.17.31; 4.17.33; 4.19.35 cited in Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ : John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard*, 1st ed., Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). p. 144, fn. 38.

<sup>144</sup> Comm. Eph 5.32. C.O.51:227

<sup>145</sup> Comm. Eph 5.32 C.O.51:782

<sup>146</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation : Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (London: G. Chapman, 1975). p. 121.

This metaphysical problematic, that Calvin first knew, still remains: how can Union be ‘spiritual’ yet ‘substantial’? How can Union with Christ not just suggest a “virtual” presence (and the unmediated, binitarian theology associated) mediated by the Spirit, but a truly ‘real’ presence of Christ’s incarnate and now ascended humanity and all his benefits available for the worshipper?

Evans proposes a return to the New Testament tradition is at least part of the answer. Evans suggests it is perhaps the eschatological transformation of humanity, that Christ himself has already experienced as the second Adam, that enables the seemingly metaphysical mystery of a substantial Union, but by means of the Spirit:

Only as Christ’s humanity has been transformed by the Spirit is it spiritually accessible “life-giving” (1 Cor 15:42-45). In the resurrection, one encounters the nexus of the old and the new Creations, and it is precisely here that all “philosophy” fails.<sup>147</sup>

Similarly, Torrance argues that Cyril’s rejection of Apollinarianism (a form of denying the humanity (‘mind’) of the risen Christ) contained the same premise. From Cyril’s work *De adoratione*, Torrance argues something had decisively altered at the ascension of Christ and the coming of the Spirit.<sup>148</sup> Human worship is spiritual in that we are united to Christ in whom and through whom our worship is vicariously mediated to the Father: “it is in the Spirit coming to us through his humanity that we are united to Christ and share in his self-presentation before

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<sup>147</sup> Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, p. 263.

<sup>148</sup> Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, p. 180.

the Father...It is then in pneumatological terms that Cyril understands the intimate Union between us and Christ.”<sup>149</sup>

At the heart of this discussion is the theological move that Calvin makes by placing the *duplex gratia* in Christ. It means that justification and sanctification – the forensic-imputed, and the organic-transformative – are not merely available to the believer *on the historical foundations of what Christ has done* but in the present day reality of the believer’s Union with Christ.<sup>150</sup> They are not therefore transactional, gifts given by the work of Christ to the believer because of the historic, done work of God in Christ on the Cross. They are the very *being* of Christ himself permanently and *presently* available to the worshipper actualizing, or making particular, the act of God on the cross and the ongoing being of God through the Cross and ascension.<sup>151</sup> Soteriology is apprehended, by the whole being of the believer, through the experience of participating in the ascended Christ’s humanity by means of the Spirit in the present day worship experience.

What is axiomatic here is that the emphasis on ascension (and Pentecost) that Calvin brings challenges any theology that purely places present-day human response back upon the past event of the Cross. The cross most certainly, as Canlis points out, is the ‘nexus’ of the crucial descent-ascent motif that is foundational for present-day human participation in the divine life. However, this past event is only made present-day reality in the life of the believer by the present-day working of the Spirit upon and within the believer. The mistake of Torrance is to

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 182; cf. “Nothing of all this takes place, and we have no participation in God or in the vicarious activity of Christ...except in and through the Spirit and his distinctive activity in uniting us to the Son and through him to the Father.”

<sup>150</sup> See Evans, p. 264 for discussion.

<sup>151</sup> Gunton, *The Barth Lectures*, p. 203: “For Calvin the doctrines of the person and work of Christ are interchangeable – he is not interested in the abstract two-natures theology. *Christ, for Calvin, does what he does because of what he is [and] it is because of this that he restores our relationship to God.*” Italics mine. For an example of an alternative view see for example, Henrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (trans. G. T. Thomson), (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950).

think that an ‘existential model’ of worship such as experience-orientated P-C worship, inherently side-lines, denies or diminishes the vicarious humanity of Christ and Union with Christ found in Calvin. This is a false conclusion. A true Calvin-inspired theology of P-C worship thoroughly holds the centrality of the events of the cross but not as a past event, but rather as a past, present and continual reality for and in the life of the believer.<sup>152</sup> This is the soteriology of adoption, through the shape of the double grace, made present and continuous in the life of the believer through the praxis of pneuma-centric P-C worship, by means of the agency of the Spirit uniting creature to Creator in Christ.

The Spirit’s role in worship that P-C worship emphasises means that perhaps an alternative new testament motif needs to be brought out in harmony with the Cross-centric note for worship theology: the present continual role of Christ as High Priest:

I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;

in the assembly I will sing your praises.

And again, “I will put my trust in him.”

And again he says, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the

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<sup>152</sup> Pinnock picks up this idea in his Pneumatology: “The cross is not only a past event but also a present factor in experience” *Flame of Love*, p. 179.

sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. *Hebrews 2*

This motif perhaps pioneers a Reformed-Pentecostal worship theology that does not have to split the person and work of Christ in order to make sense of both the historic cross and the present day experience of Christ. Rather, it places past, present, and future all in the *person of Christ*.

Thus, in Evans' words, which echo Canlis' reading of Calvin, "the redemptive experience of Christ is not only paradigmatic for the Christian, but *also is constitutive of the believer's experience* (the believer will not be merely raised *like* Christ, but is crucified and raised *with* and *in* Christ, Rom 6:4-10; Eph 2:4-7)." <sup>153</sup> The experience of P-C worship is a sharing ultimately in the "redemptive experience of Christ". <sup>154</sup>

In summary, P-C worship praxis is a form of participatory soteriology. P-C worship is in essence the outward sign of the invisible grace that is the radically relational and dynamic soteriological scheme offered in the love of the Christian Triune God. Justification and sanctification thus are enjoyed in an ongoing relational dynamic of Union with Christ that P-C worship plays such a key role in facilitating. P-C worship is the double grace 'subjectively realised'. <sup>155</sup> Intimacy and encounter are the experience of sharing in the life of Christ by the Spirit. Only through Union with Christ, regularly, ongoingly realized through such means of grace as P-C worship does the life of Christ become the life of the believer. In P-C worship,

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<sup>153</sup> Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, p. 265.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p. 245.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p. 265.

the obedience of Christ becomes *applied* to the humanity of the believer in the power of the Spirit.

Precisely *how* metaphysically this can be (a ‘spiritual’ and ‘substantial’ Union) is at the edge of understanding. What we can be certain of is that a move away from any spatial notions of bodily presence is the right move.<sup>156</sup> As Evans concludes, “the humanity of Christ has surmounted the limitations of the material and has entered the realm of the spiritual”.<sup>157</sup>

Perhaps here, 19<sup>th</sup> Century German Calvin scholar John Nevin is helpful to end our discussion:

Here then we see the nature of the mystical Union, as it holds between Christ and his people. It falls not, in any sense, within the sphere of nature as such, and we cannot say in this view that it is physical. But just as little are we at liberty to conceive of it as merely moral. Its sphere is that of the Spirit. In this sphere, however, it is in the highest measure real; far more real, indeed, than it could possibly be under any other conceivable form.<sup>158</sup>

## **7. Summary of P-C worship in Reformed perspective**

In summary, a retrieval of Calvin’s doctrine of participation through Union with Christ provides a rich foundation to construct a theology for P-C worship with immense possibilities to not only establish, but also govern and critique P-C praxis. In particular and in essence it is in the area of mediation that Calvin’s work is so critical, providing a dynamic Trinitarian

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<sup>156</sup> As both Calvin and, for example, John Nevin held (see Evans, pp. 141-183 for discussion.)

<sup>157</sup> Evans, p. 180.

<sup>158</sup> Nevin, *The Mystical Presence*, p. 229.

framework within which both the immanence and transcendence of God can be advocated without cost to either. We have found that Calvin's Union With Christ provides a soteriology for P-C Worship which is Christocentric and Pneuma-dependent all in a Trinitarian-framed experience – applied soteriology.

## **Chapter 9: A Descent-Ascent Hermeneutic to Expand the Sacramental: Towards a ‘Trinitarian Participatory Ontology’ of Worship**

### **1. Introduction**

By bringing Calvin’s notion of Union with Christ and his distinct understanding of the nature of divine-human relationship into dialogue with P-C worship’s emphasis on encounter and the Spirit, we have uncovered the beginnings of a constructive theology for P-C worship. In particular a foundation from which to establish, govern and critique P-C experientially orientated theology surrounding the immanence of God in worship.

I have shown that Calvin provides a surprising resource for affirming, deepening and challenging P-C worship theology and praxis. In summary it is as follows:

#### ***1.1. Summary of theology***

##### **Mediation**

- a. At the centre of any understanding of divine-human relationship has to be an awareness of the human ascended Christ. Calvin’s notion of participation suggests that any P-C ‘worship in the Spirit’ is simultaneously Christocentric. Human participation is in the shape of, and in Union with, Christ’s own descent and ascent via the nexus of the Cross.
- b. Human participation in the divine life is also utterly Spirit-dependent, the Spirit being the agency by which we are united to Christ as mediator. The Spirit places us in the ascended Christ. The Spirit is thus ‘the threshold to participation’ (Canlis). There is no



way to participate in the life of God than through participating in (and through) the humanity of Christ through (and in) the activity of the Spirit. The Spirit is the ‘location’ of our participation in the divine.

- c. Both of these ‘hands of God’ are essential to an understanding of how there can be any ‘intimacy’ or closeness between Creature and Creator whilst not collapsing them into one another. Such a Trinitarian dynamic notion of mediation protects from any sense of mystical Union in P-C worship. Similarly, the vicarious humanity of Christ ensures there is no place for P-C worship to function as any form of gnostic escapism.
- d. This Trinitarian frame for mediation provided by Calvin’s work offers a protection for P-C worship from the danger of its praxis suggesting a binitarian sub-Christian notion of God, diminishing or even bypassing the need and uniqueness of Christ as mediator. Similarly, it can shield P-C praxis from suggesting the Spirit is *less* than divine – merely something or someone in-between ‘God’ and the worshipper.

### **The participatory shape of intimacy**

- e. Calvin’s articulation of the divine-human relationship as one of Trinitarian participation provides a theological validity to P-C worship claims of a personal experience of the presence of God - ‘intimacy’. Participation, understood as an *intimacy framed by difference* can act as a crucial governor for P-C worship praxis. Extreme intimacy is indeed possible as espoused by P-C worship praxis. However, it needs protecting from theological error by adopting a theological foundation which notes the Spirit’s role in mediating *the* mediator, Christ, thus preserving the particularity and difference of both ends of the relationship.

- f. Within such a strong Christological frame, any focus on sung worship facilitating ‘intimacy’ must take seriously sin and the fallen human condition. Having intimate encounter with God in P-C worship is not an escape from our creaturely being, but a journey *in* our humanity *with* Christ *in* his humanity through the nexus of the Cross and forward in resurrection life by means of the Spirit. It is the double grace applied to the life of the believer.
- g. Communion with God is not just part of an individual’s aspiration for the time of worship but is part of the whole of Creation’s very basis and telos through Union with Christ.
- h. Intimacy is to be articulated theologically as not merely a closeness to Christ’s divine nature, or to the Holy Spirit, but an intensification of our Union with Christ in his ascended reality by means of the gift of the Spirit. Christ is not merely to be imitated but united to. This expands the goals, beliefs and expectations of P-C worship. Intimacy with God is far more expansive than the P-C worship metaphor of romantic encounter. It is the enjoyment of being united to Christ – the increase of the life of Christ leading to the full realisation of created particularity in the agency of the Spirit.
- i. The emotion expressed and observed by critics in P-C worship can be understood as part of the dynamic restoration of divine-human relationship, adoption, and exchange of sonship. True participation in P-C worship will never be emotional escapism as Union with Christ intrinsically involves engagement with the whole being of the human Creature.

- j. 'Intimacy' thus must have a communal (ecclesial) and missional dimension. It is the whole of Christ that the worshipper receives in worship – love of God and love of neighbour. Moreover, the worshipper is participating in the economic *missional* life of the Trinity in the world.

### **The Spirit**

- k. The work of the Spirit in the congregation in P-C worship is thus *soteriology applied* or made particular in time. It is the double grace applied to the life and lives of the worshippers. It is not solely sanctification applied or spirit-baptism extended but salvation in its ongoing fullness.
- l. In this light, any work of the Spirit upon, within and amongst the congregation in worship is a mediation of the life of the risen Christ. The Spirit is not merely representing Christ but uniting us to his life. Gifts of the Spirit and the supernatural are thus part of the 'benefits of Christ' found in enjoyment of life in Christ in the Trinity by means of the Spirit relating the particularity of the time- and space-bound worshipper to the transcendent Triune God.
- m. As well as having a personal therapeutic role (the application of soteriology as the double grace through Union with Christ in the believer), the Spirit has an ecclesial role in P-C worship. P-C worship acts as a place where the journeys of both the individual and the collective, inseparably, in ascent with Christ are constituted and sustained.

- n. The work of the Spirit is also eschatological in orientation – pulling forward Creation towards the fulfilment of its original design through participation in the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Singing places the self therefore into the historic, present and future expansive move of the Trinity to restore all of Creation through Christ to its original design. It is the “release of Easter life”.<sup>1</sup>
- o. P-C worship is thus both an expression of, and part of the process of, the goal of humanity. In this regard, P-C worship is a foreshadow of the end-time final worship of resurrected Adams alive in the Second Adam by the Spirit. P-C worship is an ‘enchanted’ place of potential – a place where everything becomes what it was made to be. Where the Creature is restored to an ‘upright posture’.<sup>2</sup>
- p. Worship thus ultimately functions as a reversal of the fall by ascension with Christ by the Spirit. It is a movement back from independence to dependence. Worship is the arena where the divine-human relationship is dramatized and actualised.
- q. If the Spirit is key for Union with Christ and therefore the gateway to human participation in the divine life, worship is a gift from God *for the infilling and continual re-filling of the human by the Holy Spirit*. It is one of the key processes by which our humanity is restored in right relationship with the Creator. This is one of the key roles for P-C worship, as it is epicleptic in form.

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<sup>1</sup> Pinnock. p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Billings, *Calvin*, p. 45.

- r. P-C worship is a key location of divine-human activity by which the need for the Spirit is expressed, the receptivity to the Spirit is heightened, and the participation in Christ by the Spirit is intensified. It is the place our dependent anthropology is voiced. Singing acts as both a sign and a fulfilment of that which it symbolizes – the human need for God’s activity by his Spirit, placing us in Christ, to fulfil and restore our very identity, purpose and affections.
- s. P-C worship is the realm of ongoing activation of believers by the Spirit. It is also an ongoing response by humanity for the free pardon announced by the Father over the human life.

#### **P-C worship as the experienced reality of Union with Christ**

- t. Union with Christ is a continual mode of the restored human life with P-C worship acting as intensified moments of re-orientation and correction in this journey. There is a key soteriological aspect of the experience of divine presence in P-C worship that has been under-articulated and perhaps under-realised.
- u. P-C articulations of experiencing the ‘presence of God’ through worship are thus attempts to articulate the double grace through Union with Christ *applied and experienced* in the life of the gathered church. The experience of the presence of God in P-C worship is the experience of the spiritual Union of our humanity with the risen humanity of Christ and thereby enjoyment of the divine life of the Trinity.

- v. Far from restricting or undermining P-C worship's experience-orientated philosophy, a Reformed Perspective can act to establish it. Calvin's work offers a Christological correction to pneumatocentric praxis, thus establishing the grounds for the experienced reality of Union with Christ.
- w. The experience of the presence of God in P-C worship is soteriology *made particular*. It is the subjective application of Union With Christ – the event of Christ made real in the life of the human. It is therefore an activity that re-orders the person's affections, decisions, and physicality as salvation is applied and resurrection is in process. It may be partial experience but it is total adoption. P-C worship is the process of communion with God 'all the way down'<sup>3</sup>.
- x. Calvin's notion of the 'accommodation of God' in sacrament can be extended to include P-C worship. Worship leaders and music itself are forms of accommodated signs of grace – living sacraments for others to 'see' and 'hear' the double grace of Christ offered to them for adoption into the triune life. It is grace made audible.
- y. P-C worship is a participation in the present, continual and end-time orientated (present) person of Christ rather than the (past) event of the cross.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 170.

## ***1.2. Summary of application***

- a. Human Leaders and created matter, such as music, are instrumental to the encounter with God's grace that occurs in P-C worship but not the efficient or first cause. Dependent anthropology and the doctrine of sin prevent a sacerdotalism where an over-reliance develops on the 'media' of the sacrament to be the efficient or first cause of divine presence rather than a dependency on the agency of the Holy Spirit. The risen Christ is the ultimate mediator and 'first cause' between worshipper and God by means of the Spirit. Leadership and music are forms of accommodated grace. Instrumental parts of making grace 'visible' or 'audible' for others.
- b. The instinctual epicleptic form of P-C worship needs to be Christologically framed. Blocks of worship therefore need to be framed by other liturgical and sacramental elements in order to maintain the balance of Christocentric and Pneumatocentric worship. The challenge for P-C worship is the form does not suit carrying the weight of theological responsibility. It is primarily an oral liturgy – in and of itself it can't *reliably* be Christocentric.
- c. The stress placed on the person and agency of the Spirit in P-C worship must be preserved and promoted in future praxis. If P-C worship loses its sense of Spirit-dependent anthropology it will lose its very distinction and collapse into the category discussed in chapter 3 of 'contemporary' worship. In such a scenario there is no sense of any overt *need* for the Spirit in the worship as the emphasis is on the music and the production elements performing as a kind of pseudo-Spirit – one who affects the emotional engagement of the human without being asked or acknowledged to activate a far more 'substantial' engagement of placing the worshipper *in the ascended Christ*.

- d. Focus must be equally on the ascended humanity of Christ and Him as present-continuous high priest, rather than either a more static understanding of Him as victorious, risen, king or a focus on the eschaton and needing the Spirit to bring the *future* to the present.
- e. If P-C worship functions as a vehicle for both the contemplation of the face of God but also realization of the dependent face of ourselves, then P-C worship needs to contain both adoration *and* confession.
- f. P-C worship needs to expand its understanding and expectation of the nature of the Spirit's role in, through and upon the worshipper. The Spirit's purpose must not be limited by understanding his work to be primarily in the therapeutic category at the neglect of the missional, teleological categories.
- g. New models need to be investigated by P-C practitioners that promote the *active* agency of believers in their participation in the Triune life of God alongside the more 'passive' models of 'soaking' or 'waiting on the Lord' epitomised by 'ministry time' and the ritual prayer of 'Come Holy Spirit' discussed in chapter 3.
- h. Relatedly, the intrinsic utilitarian emphasis of P-C worship on receiving from God and having a personal experience of God must be augmented by an understanding of singing as an accommodation of God to us to enable a human (en-Spirited) voluntary response of thanksgiving and gratitude.



### ***1.3. Deeper questions***

Besides releasing fruitful theological insights for the contemporary horizon of P-C worship, Calvin's Union with Christ also provokes deeper questions as to the nature of divine-human relations. When the epicleptic form of P-C worship and the theology of Calvin are brought together a possibility emerges of forming a more general philosophy of *Christian* worship: of how Creaturely reality participates in the Creator's life.

For Calvin's theology of Union with Christ to be actualized in church life, it required a commitment to the sacraments (and preaching of the Word). As Nicholas Wolterstorff summarises, Calvin's work is so significant as it altered "the fundamental conceptuality of thinking about the sacraments from a sign-agency conceptuality to a God-agency conceptuality."<sup>4</sup> But what does this God-agency conceptuality, expressed as Spirit-enabled Union with Christ mean for sacramental theology - the traditional philosophy or 'ontology' of Christian worship.

If, in light of our discussion, sacramental is taken to mean the ways in which the divine Spirit of God works upon and within the human creature in the gathered church context of the body of Christ, incorporating the believer into the ascended 'real' true body of Christ, then how are we to understand the 'sacramental ontology' of chapter 5? Are we to throw out Creation/incarnation doctrines as the basis for understanding divine-human relations in order to bring in more emphasis on resurrection/ascension in light of Calvin's work and the epicleptic form of P-C worship? Could a synthesised Pentecostal-Reformed ontology of a truly

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<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Sacrament as Action, Not Presence," in *Christ, the Sacramental Word*, ed. David Brown and Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1996). p. 105. He compares here Aquinas as the classic 'sign-agency' reader of the sacramental action.

‘enchanted’ world be more useful for worship theology (if it can be articulated)? It is in this area that P-C worship has a distinct contribution to make to the wider Christian tradition.

Picking up the themes of Chapter 5, the rest of this chapter will argue that Boersma is right to claim Calvin doesn’t fit into a ‘sacramental outlook’ but not for the reasons Boersma gives. Calvin’s work, when read through the lens of P-C worship, redefines the ‘sacramental outlook’ by providing a synthesis of both incarnational *and* pneumatologically orientated ontology. This synthesis provides the boundaries for any future work constructing theologies of not just P-C worship but all Christian (Trinitarian-mediated) worship.

Union with Christ provides a soteriology for P-C Worship which is Christocentric and Pneuma-dependent all in a Trinitarian framed experience (soteriology *applied*). In that frame it is possible to argue for a Pentecostal-Incarnational hermeneutic rather than a purely Creation-Incarnation one to articulate an ontology of an ‘enchanted world’ (in which gathered worship is key) to expand traditional sacramental categories. This is where our project moves from not only a theological reflection on P-C praxis but also a P-C reflection on theological questions. As Daniel Castelo rightly suggests: “‘Worship’ is not simply what one does at choice moments but part of the narrative Christians use for describing who they are and how they live and participate in the world. ‘Worship’ points to the conditions and possibilities for the God-honouring and God-enjoying form of life...’Worship’ suggests a way of being.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Castelo, "From 'Hallelujah!' To 'We Believe' and Back: Interrelating Pentecostal Worship and Doctrine," in Lee Roy Martin (ed.), *Toward a Theology of Pentecostal Worship*, (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2016), pp. 289-290.

## 2. Back to the enchanted world: the sacramental route

As we saw in Chapter 5, P-C worship has a commonalty with some sacramental approaches to worship in that it shares a belief in some form of what is often termed an ‘enchanted world’<sup>6</sup>. For the sacramental tradition (as well as recent adoptions of it such as the Radical Orthodoxy movement<sup>7</sup>) this understanding of reality is explained as matter being suspended in the divine in some way – a sacramental principle lying at the heart of reality.

This understanding of reality, for Radical Orthodoxy, is an ‘ontology of participation’. Crucially, what is meant here by ‘participation’ is an *incarnational* principle whereby materiality participates in the divine. Boersma’s work in Chapter 5 is an example of this incarnational participatory ontology (Boersma being one of the theologians James K A Smith would include in the ‘sensibilities’ of Radical Orthodoxy<sup>8</sup>).

Whilst acknowledging the similarity in pursuing a notion of participation in divine life, and thus an ‘enchanted’ world, Calvin’s work offers a crucial *Trinitarian* key for understanding participation and suggests clues as to how to integrate both incarnational and Creation emphases alongside ascension and pentecost emphases. Moreover, it removes the need for any reliance on a philosophical grounding for constructing Christian ontology.

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<sup>6</sup> Karkkainen writes: “Pentecostalism’s belief in the ongoing, dynamic work of the Spirit in the world is in keeping with the contemporary postmodern dynamic worldview, with its ‘turn to experience’.” “[it also has a] the new appreciation of the affectivity of religious experience and knowledge – a feature the philosopher JKA Smith also finds in common between Pentecostalism and radical Orthodoxy.” Karkkainen, *Pneumatologies in Systematic Theology*, p. 233 in Anderson, *Studying Global Pentecostalism : Theories and Methods*.

<sup>7</sup> Smith argues for Radical Orthodoxy being seen as a ‘sensibility’ shared by a broad ‘constellation of theologians’. See Chapter 2 of James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy : Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.* and “The Spirit, Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong’s Pneumatological Assist.” p. 253, fn. 3.

In this chapter, it will become clear that whilst it is useful placing P-C worship in the category of the sacramental in order to further theological discussion, such terminology needs careful clarification as to what it means and what it doesn't mean. We will argue that it needs to mean a *Trinitarian participatory ontology* – a synthesis of both the immanence-orientated spirituality of P-C worship (captured in a P-C pneumatological ontology) and the sacramental incarnational ontology modelled by Boersma. A synthesis made possible by the way Calvin articulates Union with Christ and the work of the Spirit.

### **3. The shift towards pneumatology as the basis for participation**

As one of the leading Pentecostal theologians, Amos Yong is a key dialogue partner to bring into this discussion of P-C ontology. Not only does he have some key insights into the pneumatological aspects of 'presence' but he also shares a similar critique of any notion of a 'sacramental principle' (such as that outlined in Chapter 5) which places such a high value on the material. His focus is particularly on the Radical Orthodoxy movement and his perspective is firmly Pentecostal. He argues that the sacramental and incarnational underpinning of Radical Orthodoxy's understanding of participation and ontology needs a "pneumatological assist":<sup>9</sup>

...the gift of the Spirit to 'all flesh'<sup>10</sup> underwrites the ontological participation of all Creation in the divine presence and activity that sustains the world, thus providing a

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<sup>9</sup> Amos Yong, "Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal: Rethinking the Intersection of Post/Modernity and the Religions in Conversation with James K.A. Smith," *ibid.* p. 246. For more on Yong's pneumatological ontology see: Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 27-48; Cf. *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), Ch. 7; also Vincent Bacote, *The Spirit in Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), pp. 117-48.

<sup>10</sup> A reference to Acts 2.17 quoting Joel 2.28. A foundational text for Pentecostals.

‘pneumatological assist’ to a sacramental principle which re-values the material world.<sup>11</sup>

Yong holds together here the possibility of valuing and upholding the goodness of material Creation whilst also firmly espousing a Pentecostal confidence in the crucial importance of a robust Pneumatology. Yong hopes to expand Radical Orthodoxy’s notion of participation in a “deeply pneumatological direction”<sup>12</sup> resulting in a more Trinitarian conception of participation<sup>13</sup> what he calls a ‘pneumatologically conceived ontology’.<sup>14</sup> Yong notes there is no “soteriological universalism” in this articulation of a pneumatological based participatory ontology.

Where Yong uses the Pentecost narrative of Acts 2 – the Spirit being poured out ‘on all flesh’<sup>15</sup> to achieve this pneumatological ‘assist’, instead we can use a wider foundation rooted in the economy of salvation: Calvin’s Trinitarian framework for divine-human relationality brought into dialogue with P-C worship.<sup>16</sup>

Traditional readings of Calvin’s theology would place him in what Jenson calls a ‘Reformation Ontology’<sup>17</sup> where everything rests on the person ‘in Christ’. However, the absolute dependency Calvin placed on the Spirit for Union with Christ to occur suggests the need to

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<sup>11</sup> Yong, “Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal”, p. 247.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 250.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 246.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 247. For example, Yong’s position is: ‘spirit-nature opposition is a false one’ (Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh : Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005). p. 268, rather, ‘the Spirit infuses the world’ (p. 281). Even more specifically, the Spirit “infuses the orders of Creation with a teleological dynamic” (see, p. 282).

<sup>15</sup> Amos Yong, *Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal*, p. 246f.

<sup>16</sup> Smith criticises Yong for stretching his use of this passage too far. See James K. A. Smith, "The Spirit, Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong’s Pneumatological Assist," p. 254, fn. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism : The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). p. 65.

amend or augment this analysis. As Canlis points out, the ‘place’ where Union happens is the Spirit<sup>18</sup>.

Thus, Calvin’s work is a valuable means by which both physical and spiritual can be upheld<sup>19</sup>. As we have seen, the Spirit is the agency by and in whom matter is taken up in Christ’s ascent and thereby participates fully in His life.<sup>20</sup> Calvin’s Union with Christ thus offers a correction and challenge to Radical Orthodoxy and Boersma’s sacramental position of an incarnational hermeneutic for ontology. Calvin’s work suggests an incarnational-pentecostal hermeneutic, or perhaps, a *descent-ascent* paradigm to reading creaturely participation in the divine.

Such a Pneumatology, which makes the agency of the Spirit central to matter participating in the divine, makes any neo-platonic philosophy redundant in providing a basis for participation between Creator and Creature. On this Yong agrees:

‘Nature’ is revisioned in pneumatological terms so that the chasm between transcendence and Creation is overcome theologically rather than philosophically (e.g., through a revised Platonism).<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, what is proposed is a foundationally ‘relational’ ontology<sup>22</sup>. It is an utterly personal understanding of human participation in the divine – the ‘secular’ in the ‘sacred’. It is not matter suspended in the divine, nor the soul ascending to the divine, but the human person

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<sup>18</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 148.

<sup>19</sup> Against Wolterstorff, *Sacrament as Action, Not Presence*.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. p. 101 of Smith, *Thinking in Tongues : Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*. Although he doesn’t mention the ascent motif – but merely the Spirit’s agency by which matter is suspended in the transcendent.

<sup>21</sup> Amos Yong, *Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal*, p. 247.

<sup>22</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 512.

united to Christ by the Spirit sharing fellowship with the triune life of God. As we have seen, it is a Trinitarian participation for the world that is both personal (the Son) and experiential (the Spirit). If, as Canlis argues, “the presence of God is now in the key of the Spirit”<sup>23</sup>, then the modulation that has occurred has been a move from the key of Creation-incarnation doctrines. Yong is right therefore to argue there is a “need for a revitalised doctrine of the Holy Spirit...[the] significance of Pneumatology for both the spiritual and material realms.”<sup>24</sup>

Canlis herself categorizes this as a ‘participatory Pneumatology’<sup>25</sup>— the Spirit being the agent of particularity in the ascent relationship between divine and human. It is not just platonic participation in divine realities (as Radical Orthodoxy and Boersma)<sup>26</sup>, but personal engagement with the personal transformative reality of the triune Godhead.

In summary, Calvin’s theology of Union With Christ read in dialogue with P-C worship’s spirituality provides a pneumatological correction to a solely Creation-incarnational hermeneutic to participation and sacramentology.<sup>27</sup> The beginning and end of reality, the key to human ontology, is the person in Christ, but participating in him can only happen in the arena of the Spirit.

Moreover, as we have argued in Chapter 8, this pneumatologically framed ontology has an intrinsic eschatological orientation. Creation’s participation in God is caught up in the *ongoing* reality of Christ’s ascent and reign. Participation is not tied to the past but to the present *ongoing* ‘event’ of Christ. There is a sense of incompleteness and progression in our

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 117.

<sup>24</sup> Amos Yong, *Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal*, p. 245.

<sup>25</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 158.

<sup>26</sup> See for example, a modern take on this view: John Macquarrie, “Incarnation as Root of the Sacramental Principle,” in *Christ: The Sacramental Word*, ed. David Brown and Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> For example, held by Wolterstorff.

participation in the divine until all things have found completion in Christ (Col. 1) and been placed under Christ's feet (1 Cor. 15.25) and all creaturely realms have been 'resurrected' with, and in, Christ to the glory of the Father.

#### **4. A 'Trinitarian Participatory Ontology'**

The discussion we have brokered between Calvin's theology and P-C Worship spirituality offers a synthesis then between the sacramental and pentecostal emphases. Calvin's theology of Union with Christ brought into dialogue with the reality attested to by the experience of P-C worship provides a pathway towards affirming *both* the absolute necessity of Creation and Incarnation and the underutilised doctrines of Ascension and Pentecost.

It offers, what I am calling a 'Trinitarian Participatory Ontology'<sup>28</sup>. It is founded on the descent-ascent hermeneutic that Canlis' reading of Calvin so excellently highlights combined with the insights brought by the shared pneumatological emphasis for the mediation of divine presence that both Calvin and P-C worship have. Such an ontology has the following elements:

- 1 . Grounding in Trinitarian systematic theology, and specifically the economy of God's triune activity in the world, rather than philosophical constructs.
- 2 . Human participation in the divine life is available via the ongoing human reality of Christ by means of the Spirit joining us to his ascent.

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<sup>28</sup> I am purposely avoiding the category of 'pneumatological participation' as this is what Canlis uses to distinguish Calvin's work from a purely 'Reformed ontology' of a Christological centre. My proposal is broader than this taking into account the 'sacramental ontology' context set out in Chapter 5.



- 3 . A non-dualistic valuing of Creation and matter. The fulfilment of being is found not in an individual escape from Creation (mystical or gnostic) but a collective journey as Creation through the cross with Christ to Spirit-filled re-Creation.
- 4 . A positive anthropology allowing space for human agency, response and orientation of gratitude. It is an ontology of reciprocity<sup>29</sup> – the Spirit being the agent of particularity.<sup>30</sup>
- 5 . A personal and relational ‘I-Thou’<sup>31</sup> understanding of relationality. It is an ontology centered on the person of the risen Christ as the Christological key to human participation and the person of the Spirit as the mediator of the mediator.<sup>32</sup>
- 6 . It is inherently transformational with a dynamic notion of participation rather than static communion with the triune members<sup>33</sup>. Participation moreover occurs through a soteriological matrix. Ontology by necessity is soteriology applied. It has a total impact on the human being as part of Creation.
- 7 . It is an eschatologically orientated ontology. An ontology *in motion*. Reality is constituted in the ongoing present continuous reality of the being of Christ. Ontology, in this regard, is directional – reality united more and more into Christ being true life, and reality falling more and more away being true death.

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<sup>29</sup> Perhaps close to the Eastern Orthodox idea of ‘Synergy’. We will discuss this briefly in the final chapter.

<sup>30</sup> See Yong also on this: Amos Yong, *Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal*, p. 248.

<sup>31</sup> As opposed to the ‘I-IT’ relationality P-C worship can be in danger of in its relationship to the Spirit (see Chapter 4).

<sup>32</sup> “God, in Calvin’s way of thinking, is less a presence to be apprehended in the liturgy than an agent to be engaged.” Wolterstorff, p. 119.

<sup>33</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 145.

These seven elements of a Trinitarian Participatory Ontology help define the divine-human relationship expressed in P-C worship praxis and found in Calvin's theology of Union with Christ. However, there is one more eighth element to add – and for this we need to pause and look in more detail at James K. A. Smith's view on ontology. Situated primarily as a Philosopher and yet also a self-confessed Pentecostal he acts as a bridge between Radical Orthodoxy and Yong's approach and therefore provides our project with further fruitful steps towards formulating a Trinitarian Participatory Ontology.

## **5. Intensity of participation**

The ontology we have outlined above has similarities ostensibly with what Smith describes as a 'pentecostal ontology'<sup>34</sup> in his work *Thinking in Tongues*. However, Smith is not arriving at this ontology from the descent/ascent Christocentric yet Pneuma-dependant motif of Calvin, but more from a theology of the role of the Spirit in the world from Creation itself: "It begins from a picture of Creation that emphasizes the Spirit's essential and dynamic presence in nature... Creation is primed for the Spirit's action"<sup>35</sup> He shares a similar concern to ours to emphasise the Pneumatology overlooked by Radical Orthodoxy and Boersma, but he differs in approach by arguing from within the traditional Creation basis for sacramental ontology and participation.

Even with this Spirit focus, Yong judges Smith's work in need of a 'pneumatological assist' as he feels it is still too close to Radical Orthodoxy's Creation orientated ontology and, moreover,

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<sup>34</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues : Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*. p. 89. Indeed, he uses the same language as Canlis: 'participatory pneumatological ontology' (see p. 102.)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 103.

it is not Trinitarian enough.<sup>36</sup> For Yong, Smith is attempting to amend Radical Orthodoxy's incarnational ontology by rooting participation more in the Spirit's dynamic work in the world but doesn't go far enough<sup>37</sup>.

However, Smith's work does act as an example of the validity of bringing Reformed concerns to bear on the wider tradition (in this case sacramental ontology). Moreover, he models a synthesis of Pentecostal and Reformed theology<sup>38</sup>. He also highlights the danger of the dualistic tendency that Yong's Pentecostal Pneumatology can fall into: a dividing of the natural and supernatural. Smith's work thus offers us some key insights into the experience of the presence of God claimed by P-C worship which need to be added to our proposed ontology which we will now briefly explore.

Smith tentatively attempts to articulate what might be termed 'gradients' or 'levels' of human experience of divine presence – so key to the claims of P-C experience in worship:

While all that is participates in God through the Spirit, there are sites and events that exhibit a more *intense* participation. Thus phenomena that might be described as 'miraculous' are not instances of God 'breaking into' the world, as if God were outside it prior to such events; rather, they are instances of a unique and special mode of participation that always already characterizes Creation.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Amos Yong, *Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal*, p. 246.

<sup>37</sup> Smith agrees to some extent: "I am happy to receive and absorb Amos' pneumatological assist here and deepen this Creational or participatory ontology along specifically pneumatological lines." See, p. 254 in Smith, "The Spirit, Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong's Pneumatological Assist."

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, at the end of his book, Smith notes that ecclesiology must be 'deeply pneumatological'. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, p. 259.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues : Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*. p. 102.

There are thus, for Smith, moments where the general dynamic presence of the Spirit in the world is intensified in some way – thus a distinct mode of participation occurs. The divine-human relationship in the Spirit thus has ‘intensities of participation’:<sup>40</sup>

While a participatory or pneumatological ontology holds that *all that is* participates in the Creator, or all is animated by the dynamic presence of the Spirit, this does not mean that all participates *in the same way* or *to the same degree*.<sup>41</sup>

Smith goes on to elaborate that these levels of intensities of participation are to do with *directedness*. This idea would work with Calvin’s notion of Creation moving either towards Christ and restored ascended *imago dei* life or away towards the disintegration of the *imago dei* in the first Adam. Whilst holding that all matter exists in some way by participating in God, “this does not mean that all that exists participates *fully* or *properly* in God...To put this otherwise, it is structurally the case that all that exists participates in the divine, but not all that exists is properly ordered or directed *to* the divine; to participate *properly* in the Creator is to also be directed to the Creator.”<sup>42</sup>

Much as thus, for R.O, “the sacramental life of the church is incarnationally reconceived so that the church’s liturgy serves as a particularly intensified iconic indicator of how the material and created order participates in the divine life and work of God”<sup>43</sup>, so for our fledgling Trinitarian participatory ontology – P-C worship serves as a particularly intensified iconic

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 102.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 256.

<sup>42</sup> Smith, "The Spirit, Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong’s Pneumatological Assist." p. 256.

<sup>43</sup> Amos Yong, *Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal*, p. 237.

indicator of the *Spirit's personhood, freedom and role* in acting upon, in and through Creation's participation in the triune God in Union with Christ.

### ***5.1. The 'supernatural' and gifts of the Spirit***

According to this ontology, the concept of 'Supernatural' is thus human participation in the divine becoming properly ordered. The Spirit phenomenon associated with the form of P-C worship is thus Creation's participation intensified.<sup>44</sup> The gifts of the Spirit expand the presence of Christ in the church for the world. They are not just therapeutic additions but essential elements of human participation in the ascended humanity of Christ by agency of the Spirit. Moreover, they are components of the priestly function of the church to lead the world back to an 'upright' posture of dependency on the Triune God.<sup>45</sup>

A second aspect of our fledgling Trinitarian participatory ontology that can be progressed by Smith's insights is the inherent interest on the particular reality of the church *gathered*. As opposed to Yong who argues for a commonality between all creatures as all participate in the Spirit<sup>46</sup>, Smith has a more Hauerwas-influenced differentiation between church and world over and against what he identifies as Yong's more 'natural' Pneumatology. Smith proposes:

...a fairly robust sense of anti-thesis or discontinuity, mainly because the New Testament draws 'fairly distinctive lines between church and world'. Indeed, Paul's language is quite sharp on this score: proclaiming distinctions between a kingdom of

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<sup>44</sup> See p. 257 for more: Smith, "The Spirit, Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong's Pneumatological Assist."

<sup>45</sup> See the recent work on the 'priestly ministry': Graham Tomlin, *The Widening Circle*, (London: SPCK, 2014).

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, Yong, *The Spirit poured out on all flesh*, pp. 281-2, 293-4.

darkness and a kingdom of light, the radical difference between the old and new ‘man’ (2 Corinthians 5), and between the natural man and the spiritual man (1 Corinthians 2–3) on top of claims about the unique realities that flow from regeneration which does not seem to be a reality for ‘all flesh’, as Yong so often puts it.<sup>47</sup>

The emphasis on encountering the presence of God in P-C worship would agree with this distinction. P-C worship thoroughly places the gathered church at the centre of creaturely participation in the divine – the example *par excellence* of an intensity of participation. P-C worship acts as an *icon* of right relationality, orientation towards the maker, sustainer and perfecter – the Christian Triune God. P-C worship is the outward display of an inward reception and participation in adoption in the shape of the double grace. It is a soteriological ontology: the church as the body of Christ – an ‘in-Christ’ ontology that is first the churches and then the world’s. Smith’s theology would agree:

I think the New Testament witness compels us to retain a sense that God has called out (*ek-klesia*) a peculiar people, a people of the Spirit (indwelt, regenerate, and to be filled) which is set apart as a holy nation and a royal priesthood.<sup>48</sup>

The challenge for forming an ontology is the problem of how there can be a real distinct difference whilst simultaneously both church and world inhabit a shared ontology? Smith returns to his argument for levels of intensity based on directedness of Creation to Creator here: “I want to suggest that we could think about the difference, uniqueness, and antithesis in terms of the *intensity* of participation.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Smith, "The Spirit, Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong's Pneumatological Assist." p. 254.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 255.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 256.

We might distinguish between a *structural* participation of a low-grade intensity and a more robust, *directional* participation of high-grade intensity...it is structurally the case that all that exists participates in the divine, but not all that exists is properly ordered or directed *to* the divine; to participate *properly* in the Creator is to also be directed to the Creator.<sup>50</sup>

Any ontology that cannot hold this distinction of directional participation falls into the trap of not taking the doctrine of sin and dependant anthropology we saw in chapters 6 and 7 seriously. By holding the possibility of ‘levels’ of participation related to the direction of Creation (toward or away from being in Christ by the Spirit), we preserve the full implications of Union with Christ as soteriology applied.

In this respect, we can both affirm that all expressions of Creational life participate in the Creator, and thus have some legitimacy or value, and at the same time offer a radical critique of how such realities fail to participate *properly* in the Creator by being ordered *to* the Triune God. In other words, I think this ‘intensity’ model of participation allows us to account for both continuity *and* antithesis.<sup>51</sup>

Smith invites further discussion on whether ‘deification’ is therefore a proper articulation of the human calling:<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Smith, "The Spirit, Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong's Pneumatological Assist." p. 256.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 258.

[It] would actually represent a restoration of what it means to be properly human, not some sense of being ‘super’-human. In other words, to participate in the divine at this degree of intensity is precisely the Creational vocation of what it means to be human<sup>53</sup>.

This is the kind of deification Calvin would also agree with – an extreme intimacy with God that consists of the restoration of the *imago dei* through the wondrous exchange of Union with Christ in the secret power of the Spirit.

Thus, in summary, one final element needs adding to our fledgling Trinitarian participatory ontology:

8. It is an ontology that accounts for different degrees of participation – dependant on Creation’s degree of orientation towards Creator. The supernatural is actually the ‘right-ordered natural’. It is a rare time-bound glimpse of the full participation that can only be eschatologically fulfilled.

## **6. Conclusions**

The Trinitarian Participatory Ontology we have proposed offers a rich framework for discussing divine presence and in particular the presence-orientated praxis of P-C worship. It locates the questions surrounding Creation-Creator interaction in the context of Trinitarian participation (adoption into the Father’s family through Union with Christ by the Spirit) rather

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 257.



than purely in traditional ‘sacramental’ categories. It is built on the foundations of a Pentecostal-Incarnational hermeneutic rather than purely a Creation-Incarnation one. It firmly places Ascension and Pentecost doctrines on the scales to balance Creation and Incarnation emphases in how we are to understand the very nature of being.

It is an ontology rooted deeply in Calvin’s soteriology.<sup>54</sup> Whilst Yong wishes to distinguish between soteriology and ontology<sup>55</sup>, Smith argues that ontology is intrinsically interconnected to soteriological concerns: “a soteriological participation in the Spirit (regeneration, indwelling) is an intensification of just that ontological participation.”<sup>56</sup>

Union with Christ makes participation in the life of God central and axiomatic to the whole of life. It places a ‘person’ (the ascended Jesus) at the heart of reality, a relationship mediated by the Spirit, at the core of ontology. As Canlis articulates it, participation is thus “not a principle...[but] a way of living such that everything forces us to be in relationship.”<sup>57</sup> The realm of the Spirit, where the physical is taken up in the ascended body of Christ is the great unifier of the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘physical’, elements and ‘presence’.<sup>58</sup> This is a mystery but a logical reality given the economy of the Triune God in human history. Ascent, contextualised by the eschatological orientation of Creation, is a journey into materiality – but materiality redeemed and restored to its original intent by means of sharing in the resurrection of Christ himself. Reality is defined and ultimately fulfilled in this relational ontology.

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<sup>54</sup> Against for example Niesel’s reading of Calvin, see p.185.

<sup>55</sup> Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh : Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*. p. 247.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, "The Spirit, Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong’s Pneumatological Assist." p. 255.

<sup>57</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, p. 76.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 245.

By bringing into dialogue Calvin's soteriology and P-C worship's praxis we can produce a unique 'Pentecostal contribution to Christian theology'.<sup>59</sup> As we saw in chapter 2, Archer has argued that often the 'implicit' theology of Pentecostalism is at odds with traditional theological categories.<sup>60</sup> As we noted in the introduction, these 'categories' may well need to be stretched, expanded and redefined in the light of Pentecostal instinct, and sacramental ontology is one such example. Moreover, by challenging and expanding sacramental understandings of the world and the divine-human relationship, our work redefines the ground rules for discussion and debate surrounding P-C worship and its experience-centred, pneumatocentric approach to the divine-human relationship.

In summary, where Radical Orthodoxy, including the 'sensibilities' of Boersma's work is rooted in neo-platonic philosophies for participation, and Yong seems in danger at the other extreme almost of a form of dualism between Spirit and Creation (a position some would critique P-C worship for displaying in its praxis), Calvin's soteriology applied through the lens of P-C worship, provides a 'radical middle'. This *Trinitarian Participatory Ontology* takes both Incarnation, Ascension and Pentecost seriously, holds in tension Creation and Eschaton, and offers a framework for understanding creaturely intimacy framed in difference with the divine life. Calvin's articulation of Union with Christ and the work of the Spirit offers a satisfying synthesis of both Pentecostal ontology and sacramental incarnational ontology (close to what Evans calls 'Pneumatological-Incarnational Realism'<sup>61</sup>). In being a radical middle of the different traditions it provides an exciting pathway for ecumenical discussion surrounding

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<sup>59</sup> See Smith's 'Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy' summarised on p.151 Smith, *Thinking in Tongues : Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*.

<sup>60</sup> Archer, p. 303.

<sup>61</sup> William B. Evans, "Three Current Reformed Models of Union with Christ," *Presbyterion* 41, no. 1 - 2 (2015). See p. 25 especially. Moving one step beyond Vos (bifurcation model) and Gaffin (Pneumatological realism), Evans argues that "this relationship of Union with Christ involves a realistic connection with Christ's incarnate humanity through the Spirit and not merely the reception of the Spirit." See p. 37.

worship praxis and rich soil for further work around how P-C worship and more traditional forms of sacramental and liturgical worship can integrate.

Through the lens of this ontology, Volf is absolutely right in observing: “the presence of Christ does not enter the church ‘through the narrow portals of church office but rather through the dynamic life of the whole church.’”<sup>62</sup> P-C worship plays a crucial role in the ongoing dynamic life of the church. It can hold the narrower portals of the Dominican sacraments in parenthesis whilst being anchored in turn by their strong and uniquely Christo-centric realities. Each tradition can act as both an interpreter of and framework to the other. Creation and incarnation doctrinal foundations brought into dialogue with pentecostal and ascension convictions. This is Christo-centricity and Spirit dependency in response to the Father’s invitation to adoption. This is *Christian* worship.

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<sup>62</sup> Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness : The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Sacra Doctrina (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998). p. 152. Similarly, Macchia writes of, “the polyphonic way the Spirit makes Christ present in and through the church” Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit : A Global Pentecostal Theology*. p. 32. Cf. Welker, *God and the Spirit*, pp. 51-66.

## **Chapter 10: Conclusion**

### **1. Introduction**

We began the project with the suggestion that an investigation into Christian worship is at heart an investigation into the nature of God and how he chooses to relate to his Creation. In this closing chapter we will clarify what we have found, discuss its implications, and propose future research.

### **2. Summary**

**Chapter 1** outlined the nature of the project. The hypothesis at the broadest level was that Reformed theology had under-utilised resources that could help articulate the experiential reality of the life of the Spirit in the life of the believer, claimed by P-C worship praxis. In essence, the whole project has been a test of this premise. One aspect of Reformed Theology has been taken and tested as a foundation for a contemporary, constructive theology for P-C worship.

The element we selected was Calvin's theology of Union with Christ, as it seemed ostensibly to offer a similar emphasis to P-C worship on close divine-human relationship, but rooted in a robust Trinitarian understanding of Christian experience. Would Calvin's theology, having often been used as a foundation for critical enquiry of P-C spirituality, actually offer a surprising resource for establishing a constructive theology for P-C experiential reality? Is there an overlap between the instinctual understanding of divine-human relationship, displayed in P-C worship, and the theoretical understanding of divine-human relationship found in Calvin's

doctrine of Union With Christ? Ultimately, could these two traditions, when brought together, offer a pathway to deepen our understanding of *Christian* worship itself: a theology of Creation's participation in the divine life – an *ontology* of worship?

We went on to identify five key reasons which set the context of the project: Firstly, a scarcity of theological work on worship – especially within experience-orientated traditions such as P-C worship. We hoped the project would act in part to connect what Begbie identifies as renewal music's "dramatic dimensions of Christian spirituality" with "the whole truth of Christ as known in Scripture and tradition".<sup>1</sup> Specifically, and secondly, we identified the need to articulate a deeper theology of the distinctive understanding of divine-human relationship as personal encounter espoused by P-C worship.

A third reason for the project was the limitations of the current sacramental lens for reading P-C sung worship – could there be an understanding of mediation and presence rooted in Trinitarian Pneumatology rather than philosophical sacramentality? Fourthly, the project was to be a display of the 'Pentecostal Confidence' and unique 'genius' of P-C spirituality encouraged by James K. A. Smith. However, we noted the existence of a tension between belief in the instincts found *within* the tradition whilst at the same time acknowledging the need to step *outside* the tradition to draw from wider roots, because ultimately "pentecostal spirituality is a Catholic spirituality".<sup>2</sup> Hence, the fifth reason for the project: an experiment in funding a constructive theology for the P-C movement from wider theological horizons than are often explored.

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<sup>1</sup> Begbie, "The Spirituality of Renewal Music." pp. 233-4.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, p. Xviii.

Emerging from these reasons for the study were three prime research questions:

- a. What is the distinct understanding of divine-human relationship captured in the instinctive praxis of Charismatic worship and how can it be articulated theologically?
- b. Can the Reformed tradition, in particular Calvin's notion of Union with Christ provide a new and fruitful theological resource for the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition? A theological grounding for, and critique of, Charismatic experience?
- c. Can this dialogue between Charismatic experience and Calvin's notion of Union with Christ ultimately fund a Pentecostal confidence to speak into a wider theology of *Christian Worship* – funding a Trinitarian 'ontological framework'<sup>3</sup> for worship that expands existing sacramental models?

**Chapter 2** established the necessity of constructing a theology for P-C worship rooted in the discipline of systematics. By learning from liturgical studies, we saw how questions of worship become questions as to the nature of God himself. It is from this place that a language and logic for P-C worship's distinct understandings of divine –human relationship can emerge.

With P-C worship being primarily an experientially-orientated practice, using practical theological approaches to its study has become fashionable. However, we argued that there is a need to counter this trend and make a contribution from systematic theology. By articulating the central motif of P-C praxis from the very nature of God and his revealed relationship with

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<sup>3</sup> Davis, p. 13.

the world, a theological shape for worship can be developed. This shape enables critical reflection upon and, where necessary, reform of P-C praxis.

**Chapter 3** outlined the core insights of P-C worship praxis. By describing the praxis of P-C worship in the UK, as well as locating it within its historical and contemporary context, we were able to define terminology as well as clarify the defining core motif: encounter with the presence of God.

**Chapter 4** explored what deeper theological work had been done to articulate P-C worship praxis and this notion of encounter. We found that, despite some good work from scholars such as James Steven and others, there was a distinct lack of depth in theological articulation of the experience claimed in P-C worship. Moreover, through surveying existing literature we were able to outline the main theological themes and challenges that emerge out of this central motif, including how mediation and human participation in the divine life occur. Was there any place for soteriology amidst the dynamic Pneumatology of P-C praxis, focused so much on the vivifying and phenomenological aspects of the Spirit's work? Is there a way to frame P-C worship's characteristic epiclesis in a firmly Christological frame? Despite some mention of Union with Christ as being a key to the divine-human relationship in P-C worship, we found no further thinking on the issue and noted how the simpler term 'intimacy' had become the prime articulation of divine-human relationality and encounter in P-C worship tradition, particularly in the Vineyard-influenced UK Anglican Charismatic church.

**Chapter 5** continued the discussion by exploring one significant approach to theologizing P-C worship: the sacramental approach. If sacramental worship and P-C worship share a longing for an enchanted world, where Creation participates in Creator, could the language and

perspective of sacramental theology provide suitable vocabulary and theological foundations? We concluded that such a sacramental ontology does provide an understanding of participation in divine reality, but one which is ultimately insufficient when brought into dialogue with the experience of P-C praxis. Sacramental ontology is unbalanced with an over-emphasis on Creation and Incarnation doctrines at the expense of allowing equal weighting to the Ascension and Pentecost doctrines, rediscovered by P-C spirituality and emphasised in P-C praxis. Moreover, sacramental ontologies such as those espoused by Boersma and the Radical Orthodoxy movement are overly reliant on platonic philosophical foundations rather than the simple economy of God in salvation: creedal Trinitarian theology.

What the sacramental tradition does provide to P-C praxis however is the suggestion that what lies beneath the questions of intimacy and encounter is a deeper question of ontology. Both traditions share the same concern to re-instate theologically the active presence of God in the world and the possibility of the world participating in God.

In **Part 2** of the project we turned to Calvin and the Reformed Tradition as a possible source for constructing this theology of human participation in the divine, as displayed in P-C worship praxis. We focused particularly on the parts of Calvin's work that are directly relevant to the themes and challenges outlined in part 1. This meant looking in depth at the central theme of Union with Christ, as read through 3 key interlocutors – Todd Billings, Julie Canlis and Philip Butin.

Thus, in **chapter 6** we sought to answer 3 questions: What is the nature of Union with Christ? How does Union with Christ happen? What does it tell us about a believer's participation in the life of God? We found that, contrary to traditional readings of Calvin, Calvin's work on



Union with Christ offers a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of transcendence, offering an intimacy *framed by difference*, rather than an intimacy disallowed *due to difference*. Subsequently, grace isn't solely imputational and forensic – given from a distance and put upon the human – rather, grace is given through human participation in the very life of God through Union with Christ.

This is an ongoing soteriological event in the heart of divine-human relationality. It is, in Reformed terms, a 'double grace' of justification and sanctification – distinct, but found together in Union with Christ. Participation in the divine life is thus a specific *in Christ* rather than a general 'in God'. Christ is the mediator of participation. Moreover, this is made possible by the descent of God in Christ, the journey he made through the nexus of the Cross, and then the ascent of the fully human, fully divine Christ – the forerunner of all 'second Adams'. Participation in God, through Union with Christ, is ultimately *adoption* through a kind of shared 'ascent' by reception and ongoing involvement in the double grace of God. Intimacy with God is based on Christ's own response to the Father. It is utterly Christo-centric.

**Chapter 7** continued outlining Calvin's understanding of human participation in divine life, now focusing on the role of the Spirit. We saw how Calvin's emphasis on the Spirit is crucial as it enables both divine immanence and transcendence in a Trinitarian frame of divine-human relations. A Union without confusion, an intimacy which preserves particularity, is now possible – all through the agency of the Spirit, the 'mediator of the mediator'.

The Spirit is thus the 'secret energy' of divine-human relationship and intimacy. By being the agency by which Union with Christ is possible, the Spirit is central to the Trinitarian dynamic at work in the economy of God that incorporates believers into the life of God. Christ is truly

present to believers in worship, but not in any containable ‘local’ presence but by means of the Spirit uniting us to his risen, ascended life. Christ’s presence is thus both a substantial yet spiritual presence. Our humanness can participate and be activated by sharing in his risen humanness, all by means of the Spirit.

We found that Calvin’s anthropology is thus far more positive than the simplistic ‘total depravity’ of the populist ‘TULIP’ Calvinism acronym. Humans, although fallen, are made in the image of God and can be restored and completed by ongoing relationship with the Creator through Union with Christ by the Spirit. The work of God through the Cross, Ascension and Pentecost restores the original direction and *telos* of humanity to share in the life of God as God’s children, adopted into His family.

We also saw in this chapter how church practices such as prayer and sacrament were, for Calvin, means by which Union with Christ becomes actualized in the life of the believer. Gathered worship is an accommodation of God where the whole of Christ, by means of the Spirit, can be present and available. Grace is made visible and *enterable* in the arena of worship. Calvin provides a theological understanding for divine-human relationship in worship that brings together Christology and Pneumatology in a thoroughgoing Trinitarian framework.

**Chapters 8 and 9** were finally the chance to creatively appropriate the Calvin tradition for the P-C tradition, bringing what we had learnt of Union with Christ into dialogue with the exploration of P-C worship we had done in Part 1. **Chapter 8** outlined what a creative theology could be for P-C worship using this new understanding of Participation through Union. It had many features, including the following:

Firstly, in the area of mediation (*how* encounter is happening in P-C worship) we found that Calvin's notion of 'participation' demands that any P-C 'worship in the Spirit' needs to be simultaneously understood as Christocentric. Both 'hands' of the Father, to borrow from Irenaeus, are essential in order to have the intimacy of P-C worship without a collapse of Creator into Creature. This dynamic Trinitarian notion of mediation protects from any sense of mystical Union in P-C worship. Similarly, the vicarious humanity of Christ challenges any form of gnostic escapism. This Trinitarian frame also preserves P-C worship from suggesting a binitarian sub-Christian notion of God, diminishing or even bypassing the need and uniqueness of Christ as mediator. Similarly, it challenges P-C worship to be careful not to infer by its praxis that the Spirit is *less* than divine – merely something or someone *in-between* 'God' and the worshipper. Rather encounter in P-C worship should be theologically understood as soteriology applied or made particular in time. It is the moment the double grace is applied deeper to the life of the believer, propelling them towards a teleological completion (full resurrection) as they increase in the life of Christ by the Spirit.

Secondly, Calvin's articulation of the divine-human relationship as one of Trinitarian participation provides a theological validity to P-C worship's claims for intimacy and the experience of the personal presence of God. However, it challenges such intimacy to be of a more Trinitarian participatory shape. Communion with God is not just part of an individual's aspiration for the time of worship, but is part of the whole of Creation's very basis and *telos* through Union with Christ. Moreover, intimacy with God is not escaping creaturely being, but journeying *in* our humanity *with* Christ *in* his humanity through the nexus of the Cross and forward in resurrection life by means of the Spirit. True divine-human intimacy is thus far more expansive than the P-C worship metaphor of romantic intimacy. It is an eschatologically-orientated intimacy – the P-C worshipper through experiencing Union with Christ by the Spirit

is ultimately participating in the economic *missional* life of the Trinity in the world. Singing places the self into the historic, present and future expansive move of the Trinity to restore all of Creation through Christ to its original design.

P-C worship is thus ultimately an expression of, and conduit for, the reversal of the fall by humanity's ongoing participation in ascension with Christ by the Spirit. P-C worship is a human and divine activity where everything created becomes what it was meant to be. In its epicleptic form it functions as a gift or 'accommodation' from God for the infilling and continual re-filling of the human by the Holy Spirit.

P-C worship is therefore an experienced reality of Union with Christ. If Union with Christ is a continual mode of the human life, then P-C worship acts as an intensified moment of re-orientation and correction in this journey. There is therefore a key soteriological aspect of the experience of divine presence in P-C worship that has been under-articulated and perhaps under-realised by those in the P-C tradition.

Chapter 8 thus showed that Calvin does indeed provide a surprising resource for affirming, deepening and challenging P-C worship theology and praxis. His theology can provide a rich foundation from which to establish, govern and critique P-C, experientially-orientated praxis and theology.

Having outlined some practical applications for P-C worship **chapter 9** moved on to discuss the deeper question that had arisen by bringing P-C worship and Union with Christ into dialogue: can a richer, wider ontology of *Christian* worship be created by uniting these

ostensibly different traditions? This is where our project moved from not only a theological reflection on P-C praxis but also a P-C reflection on wider theological questions.

Despite claims that Calvin doesn't fit in the great tradition's 'sacramental outlook', due to watering down the reality of the presence of Christ in the sacrament, we found that Calvin's work read through the motif of Union with Christ does the opposite. It has a very strong theology of Christ's presence and availability for worshippers, but conceives of it in such a Trinitarian way that it subverts the narrow existing sacramental world view and, in fact, has far more in common with P-C worship's emphases of the Spirit as mediator of human participation in God through Union with Christ. Thus, Union with Christ in dialogue with P-C worship, challenges a purely 'sacramental outlook' by providing the basis for a synthesis of both incarnational *and* pneumatologically orientated ontology. I called this synthesis a *Trinitarian Participatory Ontology*.

This describes an understanding of the divine-human relationship rooted in the economy of God in salvation rather than philosophical grounding. The Christocentric, yet Spirit-dependent, emphasis of the two traditions provides the basis for this. It combines both the immanence-orientated spirituality of P-C worship (a Pentecostal pneumatological ontology) and the traditional sacramental incarnational ontology. Thus it uses a Pentecostal-Incarnational hermeneutic rather than a purely Creation-Incarnation one to articulate the 'enchanted world' where Creation participates in the divine life. This synthesis provides the logic and grammar for a theology of not only P-C worship but all Christian (Trinitarian-mediated) worship.

We concluded that whilst it may be useful to some extent to place P-C worship in the category of the sacramental, in order to further theological discussion, such an approach needs careful

clarification as to what it means and what it doesn't. In particular, the shared pneumatological (Ascension-Pentecost) emphasis for the mediation of divine presence, that both Calvin and P-C worship have, needs to be given more weight amidst the traditional sacramental focus on a Creation-Incarnation axis for understanding human participation.

This *Trinitarian Participatory Ontology* can account for different degrees of participation as analogous to the experience claims of encounter in P-C praxis. Based on Smith, we conjectured that such intensification of participation in the divine life is dependent on Creation's degree of orientation towards the Creator (which P-C worship, in its epicleptic form has the potential to help express and enable). The 'supernatural' in P-C worship is therefore best understood as the 'right-ordered natural'. The Spirit makes humans 'supernormal'. The P-C experience of the Spirit is therefore a rare time-bound glimpse of the full participation that can only be ultimately eschatologically fulfilled.

### **3. Achievements**

The project has brought together two very different traditions in order to make a unique contribution to the development of theology for P-C worship and the wider P-C tradition. It has produced a bold Pentecostal-Reformed outline of what *Christian* participation in the life of God through worship means.

The project acts as a reminder that Calvin provides a robust Trinitarian, Pneumatocentric, as well as Christocentric, theology of mediation upon which creative theologies for Christian worship can be built. Moreover, it shows that P-C worship has insights that can help to re-fund the sacramental category and ontology for the wider tradition.

The *Trinitarian Participatory Ontology* proposed takes both Incarnation, Ascension and Pentecost doctrines seriously, holding them in tension with Creation and Eschaton, whilst offering a framework for understanding Creaturely intimacy, framed in difference with the divine life. This Christocentric, pneumatological participation offers a rich vocabulary and horizon for discussing divine presence in the midst of human worship.

Moreover, this notion of Pentecostal-Reformed participation offers the beginning of a theological ‘radical middle’ for different sacramental, liturgical and Charismatic traditions. It provides a rich pathway for ecumenical discussion surrounding worship praxis, and fertile soil for further discussion around how P-C worship and the wider Christian worship tradition can learn from one another.

As a theology, Union with Christ offers the basis for a thoroughgoing Trinitarian soteriology which is applied as ongoing experience in worship. In its shape of the *duplex gratia*, Union with Christ uniquely holds together both divine agency (the work of God in Christ on the cross and the imputation of righteousness and forgiveness to us) and human agency in responding in gratitude and growing in the life of Christ as an adopted member of the divine family. Both ends of the divine-human relationship are wrapped together inseparably in the container of a Spirit-enabled Union of the believer to Christ – the key to human participation, and completion, in divine life. Participation based on the mediation of Son and Spirit secures an intimacy, a Union with God that is both theologically orthodox and yet adventurous, immanent but never local, personal and yet corporate.

In the introduction to the project we suggested that bringing Calvin into dialogue with P-C worship would offer an “interesting and unpredictable conversation”, a new lens through which to see reality and interpret traditions. Here are some examples of the potential power of such a lens:

#### *A theological resource*

The project makes a significant contribution to the theological resources available for practitioners and theorists reflecting on the P-C worship tradition. Even as a dialogue partner to disagree with, the project plays a role in filling the gap in the academic discussion surrounding the still relatively young discipline. It offers an example of an ‘academic assessment’ of P-C tradition that some commentators have found so hard to do.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, being situated primarily within the prescriptive approach, the project acts as a suitable dialogue partner for studies from other disciplines, such as those found within the umbrella of ‘Christian congregational studies’. In this vein, chapter 2 on methodology is a standalone valuable contribution to further discussion around precisely *how* theology should be done, particularly with regard to the worship practices of the church and especially experience-orientated traditions such as P-C worship.

Although the majority of the discussion has been orientated to more systematic and philosophical theology, the project offers some practical suggestions for church practitioners. The Christological framework to Pneumatology invites P-C practitioners to take more note of how reliably Christo-centric their praxis actually is. Meanwhile, the pneumatocentricity of P-

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<sup>4</sup> “[Pentecostalism is an] essentially oral, musical and experimental movement” and therefore is “less susceptible to neat academic assessment”, Gordon Mursell, *English Spirituality : From 1700 to the Present Day* (London: SPCK Press, 2001), p. 405.



C worship and the pneuma-dependance of Calvin's understanding of Union with Christ, offers an invitation to sacramental and liturgical traditions to pay more attention to the pneumatological basis of participation. There are further implications in regard to mediation, priesthood and the construction of liturgical space that could be developed in more populist form. The discussion in Chapter 3 regarding terminology is a much needed contribution to the discussion begun by Lester Ruth and continued by Steven Holmes around definition.

### *Cross tradition dialogue*

The project serves as a resource to those within the P-C movement but also enables far wider inter-tradition dialogue, particularly around the current trend of searching for a theological and practical frame for an 'enchanted world'. The project succeeds at offering the foundations for such dialogue as it seeks to utilise a shared *Christian* language and framework, born from a combination of liturgical studies, sacramental theology and Trinitarian theology.

Studebaker recognises the potential in such unity and how Pentecostal theology can contribute to the wider Christian community:

The options for Pentecostals do not reduce to the false alternatives of defining the movement in terms of either Charismatic experience or theology and doctrine. The Pentecostal movement is about being caught up in an experience of God's Spirit that transforms lives and empowers them to serve God in this world. Yet that experience of the Spirit points the way toward a Pentecostal theology. Not a theology that fractures

the Christian communities, but a theological ‘tongue’ of the Spirit of Pentecost that contributes to the richness of the Christian community.<sup>5</sup>

The possibility of unity in theological pursuit and renewal in church praxis is therefore offered by the project. It responds to Billings’s call to Protestants to “recover a catholicity that is both biblical and Christ-centered.”<sup>6</sup> as well as that of Michael Allen who argues the way to renewal is “through retrieval of our Catholic and Reformational heritage.”<sup>7</sup> My work can contribute as a new voice in the fledgling arena of the pursuit of a ‘Reformed Catholicity’<sup>8</sup>, particularly in the area of looking at how such theological retrieval can influence actual congregational life and vice versa. This is especially relevant for my own tradition, the Anglican church, where both Catholic, Reformed and Charismatic co-exist and, at best, work together as a ‘generous orthodoxy’.<sup>9</sup> Theologians and practitioners within the Anglican church will find parts of chapter 3 especially helpful in understanding some of the historical context of Charismatic worship within the church, as well as gaining awareness as to its current manifestation.

The project thus offers an outline of the deeper river of our shared faith which Billings references in his own work: “when one learns to really inhabit a tradition with depth, one can hit the ‘Catholic water table.’ At that point, Baptists, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, Reformed, and Orthodox can all find areas of common ground, even amid real and significant ongoing differences.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Steven Studebaker, *From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), p. 191.

<sup>6</sup> J. Todd Billings, "Catholic and Reformed: Rediscovering a Tradition," *Pro Ecclesia* 23:2 (2014). p. 132. The catholicity he refers to is centred on creedal Christianity – Trinitarian (Nicene) and Christological (Chalcedonian) faith in particular (see pp. 138-139: “In a basic sense, I refer to our confession of ‘the holy Catholic church’ in the Apostles’ Creed...”)

<sup>7</sup> Taken from a Press Release, quoted in Billings, “Catholic and Reformed”, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup> Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*.

<sup>9</sup> The informal strap line for St Mellitus College – the, youngest, largest and fastest growing Anglican training college in the UK (as of 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Billings, “Catholic and Reformed”, p. 139.

### *A new horizon for Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue*

The fusion of P-C worship and Calvin's Union with Christ has resulted in a rich and exciting new perspective for further theological work. One example is the ability of the project to begin to answer deeper questions such as that of Kim and Hesselink's original hypotheses in regard to pneumatological differences between Reformed and Pentecostal traditions. If we recall, Kim argued that the unique contribution P-C tradition offers is its emphasis on experiencing the 'vitality' of the life of the Spirit, expressed in the aim to be filled with the Spirit on every occasion and in an ongoing manner. Is this vitality a third, missing, function of the Spirit beyond the two found in Reformed thinking: justification and sanctification? Another form of this question is: do Pentecostals and Charismatics prioritise in theology and praxis a more *Lukan* theology of the Spirit, whilst the Reformed prefer a more soteriologically-anchored *Pauline* Pneumatology?

In reply to these questions, our project promotes a form of radical middle between the two polarities. Reformed understandings of the Spirit are not utterly different from Pentecostal, nor is a Pauline perspective on the Spirit so far removed from a Lukan understanding. If we understand Union with Christ *by the Spirit* as the key to human participation in God's triune life, power and love, then Soteriology and Pneumatology are not so separated as their theological categories suggest, but rather two sides of the same coin: *participation*. Strictly speaking there is no third category of Pneumatology ('vitality') to be added (although such a vocabulary may be helpful in articulating the distinct epicleptic form and focus of P-C worship and spirituality). Rather, the continuous filling of the Spirit can be understood as a sign of, and means by which, soteriology (the *duplex gratia*) and completion through resurrection is being *applied* in the life of the worshipper. The experience of P-C worship is the experience of

Creation being directed towards its Creator and thereby experiencing further and further restoration in Christ. Paul and Luke are holding two ends of the same stick - as are Reformed and P-C worshippers.

#### *Pentecostal contribution to sacramental theology*

Fourthly, the project functions as a Pentecostal contribution to sacramental theology. As we saw in chapter 2, Archer argues that the ‘implicit’ theology of Pentecostalism is at odds with traditional theological categories.<sup>11</sup> As we noted in the introduction, these ‘categories’ may well need to be stretched, expanded and redefined in the light of Pentecostal instinct, and sacramental ontology has proved to be one such example. Moreover, by challenging and expanding sacramental understandings of the world and the divine-human relationship, our work offers a unique voice in the discussion and debate surrounding P-C worship and its experience-centred, pneumatocentric approach to the divine-human relationship.

#### *An application of Trinitarian doctrine*

The interface of Calvin’s theology and P-C praxis begins to paint a picture of human experience as Trinitarian-sustained reality. The *Trinitarian Participatory Ontology* we have outlined as a framework for worship is an example of applied Trinitarianism. With the rise (and fall) of so-called ‘Social’ Trinitarianism, this application of Trinitarian doctrine is attractive in its revival of the foundational importance of the Christian understanding of the person and nature of our triune God. As Colin Gunton reminds us, we are in danger as theologians of making the Trinity “a conceptual puzzle rather than a saving mystery... a liturgical flourish rather than the enabling structure of our worship.”<sup>12</sup> This project reminds us that it is the doctrine of the trinity that

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<sup>11</sup> Archer, p. 303.

<sup>12</sup> Robert W Jenson, "A Decision Tree of Colin Gunton's Thinking," in *The Theology of Colin Gunton*, ed. Lincoln Harvey (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2010). p. 11.

defines our worship ultimately as *Christian*; that shapes the meaning of any human experience of the ‘enchanted’, sacramental world.

*The fruitful relationship of practical theology and systematics*

This project illustrates the conviction and confidence to combine experiential praxis<sup>13</sup> with rigorous ‘academic’ theological discourse. There is a need to include in traditional systematic and liturgical discussions the “somewhat a-logical, unpredictable, indefinable work of the Spirit in the world.”<sup>14</sup> If systematicians and liturgists are concerned with the nature of God, they must welcome and seek such theories expressed in *praxis* in the life of the community – such as is given in the major phenomenon of global P-C worship. Only then will the Spirit move fully from being the ‘step-child’ of theology, and theologians become free from “developing the logic of faith to the neglect of its dynamism and power.”<sup>15</sup>

The project suggests taking more seriously the possibility that P-C Praxis (phenomenology) is perhaps the ‘theological language’ (Hollenweger) that is closer to the *experience* of the triune life of God than any academic articulation can reach. Could the human experience of worship be the outward reality, experienced in a ‘frail’ human tent, of the eternal inclusion of Creation *in Christ* through the nexus of the Cross and his ascent as the God-man pioneering the path for all second Adams?

What is certain is that Calvin offers a significant contribution to the Pentecostal task of creating a theology of the *dynamic*: the reminder that all such dynamism begins in the nature of God himself.

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<sup>13</sup> The ‘oral’ and ‘dramatic’ theology of Hollenweger or the ‘enacted’ theology of Cartledge.

<sup>14</sup> Macchia, p. 55, fn. 88.

<sup>15</sup> Macchia, p. 55.

*Lex orandi, lex credendi?*

If Protestant tradition has favoured *lex credendi*, *lex orandi* (the rule of faith is the rule of prayer/worship), whereas the Catholic tradition has prioritised *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*,<sup>16</sup> P-C worship is seen as fitting more the Catholic emphasis in allowing doctrine to be formed by worship. However, it can be argued that P-C worship arose *out of* the doctrine of spirit baptism<sup>17</sup> before becoming cut adrift from control of this doctrine over the 20<sup>th</sup> century as Pentecostalism entered the mainstream traditions. This project similarly anchors P-C worship praxis back into doctrine, but in a different source from either traditional Pentecostal doctrine or the Wesleyan holiness tradition. Calvin's notion of participation through Union provides the law of belief that *prescribes* and acts as a grammar for praxis.

It is clear from this study in fact that the relationship between *lex credenda* and *lex orandi* is not a one-way linear pathway, but rather a perichoretic interchange and oscillation back and forth.<sup>18</sup> Worship affects doctrine, doctrine affects worship. What is spoken of the nature of God affects the worship of God and *vice versa*. Each can act to govern, challenge and inspire each other, as we have witnessed by bringing Calvin and P-C praxis into dialogue.

What then becomes most important is the question as to what forms of worship (as 'accommodations' to our creaturely condition) co-operate with the Spirit's work in uniting us to Christ and therefore placing us in the ongoing triune life of God in the world? What forms of worship leadership aid, intentionally seek, and have a posture of openness and

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<sup>16</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology : The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life : A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>17</sup> See Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, for this central lens through which to read Pentecostalism.

<sup>18</sup> Macchia agrees on this but for different reasons: "the point to be made here in relation to Hollenweger is that there is more of a reciprocal relationship between experience and doctrinal concepts among Pentecostals than he has recognised." *Baptized in the Spirit*, p. 55.

anthropological dependency on the agency and person of the Holy Spirit? What practices of crafting and decision-making for corporate worship ensure a reliable Christocentric gathered worship? What forms of worship sign the Spirit's *freedom* as a divine person of the Trinity? What components of worship act as icons of the eschatological *telos* of the mission of the economic trinity by means of the Spirit and the Son's mediatorial roles?

In P-C worship, divine-human relationship no longer remains theoretical or abstract but becomes a deeply experiential reality: the life of God in the life of the believer through being united to Christ by the agency of the Spirit. It is a participation of the deepest theological definition, the ongoing experience of salvation – the double grace applied to the life of the believer, adoption-in-process. P-C worship thus is experiential *and* doctrinal – having wide-reaching implications for both.

#### **4. Limitations**

Our project gives an account then of the nature and purpose of Christian gathered worship, moving beyond mere critique to offer, what Witvliet calls, a “constructive, theological vision for worship”.<sup>19</sup> It offers a unique contribution to Pentecostal and Charismatic scholarship, particularly around worship studies, by responding to the need identified by Stackhouse for “a model of worship that transcends the category of the phenomenal, positing a faith that is rooted in ontological and Trinitarian categories.”<sup>20</sup> But what of its limitations? What are its weaknesses?

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<sup>19</sup> Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding : Windows into Christian Practice*. p. 147.

<sup>20</sup> Stackhouse. p. 128.

*Working at the limits of Calvin's pneumatology*

Canlis asks (using Farrow's words) whether Calvin's Pneumatology is "not radical enough"<sup>21</sup>. Whilst his theology of participation paves the way for the wide, 'soteriology-applied' Pneumatology that we have shown is key to a *Trinitarian Participatory Ontology* of worship, his own thinking as to how this Pneumatology works in practice is limited. Our project thus takes Calvin's work close to the edge of its limits.

Calvin seems unable or unwilling to move very far into articulating what exactly his understanding of the Spirit's role in uniting us to the ascension of Christ means for the worshipper. Canlis observes: "It seems as though Calvin was able to articulate a robust doctrine of participation that is orientated *upward*, but his mistrust of the physical realm left him tongue-tied over its *downward* implications for the material realm"<sup>22</sup>. Heron judges similarly: "Calvin's stress upon the role of the Spirit in the Eucharist is of capital significance, though Calvin himself did not pursue it so far as we may need to do today."<sup>23</sup> The question of how precisely the Spirit facilitates a 'true' presence of Christ is left unanswered. His explanations, when pushed, are found "inadequately explained" concludes Evans.<sup>24</sup>

This hesitation about the 'downward' implications of the Spirit on the material realm is also seen in his views on outward church practice. Wallace insightfully notes: "For someone whose theology was so expressive of the possibility and necessity of participating in Christ by the Spirit through means of the Sacrament, it seems strange to only advise taking communion once a month, and in the end, accepting four times a year!"<sup>25</sup>. How far can we take seriously Calvin's

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<sup>21</sup> Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, pp. 167-171.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 169.

<sup>23</sup> Alasdair Heron, *Table and Tradition*, (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1983), p. 154.

<sup>24</sup> Evans, *Imputation and Impartation*, p. 81.

<sup>25</sup> See Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1995).



theology of Union with Christ by the Spirit through prayer and sacrament if sacrament played such a small role in his church's actual worship. Perhaps such a reality should be read conversely – taken to point to a much broader understanding by Calvin of the means of grace by which such Union is experienced and intensified. Union with Christ is after all a journey of the whole Christian life, rather than limited to sacramental partaking.

In summary, Calvin's Pneumatology is perhaps most accurately assessed as a good foundation for further development, rather than a comprehensive or complete Pneumatology in and of itself. It could be argued therefore that this project, by taking one aspect of Calvin's theology (Union with Christ), and applying it to a *praxis* of the church (P-C worship) stretches Calvin's Pneumatology (and ecclesiology) to breaking point.<sup>26</sup> The whole project probes an area where Calvin himself becomes more and more elusive, even at times silent: what does grace made visible in the church actually *look like*? Inherent in such a bold attempt as this work is both great possibility and great danger. There is clearly the need for more studies, particularly from scholars who can accurately read Calvin's theology whilst also accurately understanding areas of contemporary church praxis.

### *Too intimate for Anglicanism*

The notion of participation we have espoused in this project, whilst confirming and challenging the P-C tradition, may not sit comfortably within Anglican worship tradition. This is in itself ironic as Anglicanism with its fusion of both Reformed and Catholic sensibilities *should* be a

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<sup>26</sup> A widely held traditional view is that Calvin had no place for the outworking of the Spirit in the believer other than through aiding understanding of the Scriptures. See for example, Louis Bouyer, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, vol. III, (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), p. 87. Cf. Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, pp. 28-39. Meyendorff's argument that Calvin ultimately placed his theology of immanence and God's availability to the worshipper within a *sola scriptura* framework in order to avoid Catholic notions of immanence within transcendence through sacrament is a possible explanation for this. See John Meyendorff, "The Significance of the Reformation in the History of Christendom," in *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), pp. 166-168.

suitable cradle for a Catholic-Reformed notion of participation based on the Trinitarian economy. However, as Allchin notes, a general uncomfortability resides in Anglicanism with any notion of worshippers sharing in the life of God.<sup>27</sup> Thus P-C worship may find itself adapted as a *form* more than as a *theology* within Anglicanism.

### *Calvin's view of music*<sup>28</sup>

It is not only Calvin's Pneumatology that is stretched by the project but also potentially his view of music in church praxis. Calvin valued immensely singing the psalms in worship<sup>29</sup>, with the average service in Geneva containing the equivalent of 5 hymns of 6 stanzas each.<sup>30</sup> Despite such a high view of singing, Calvin did not always hold the use of musical instruments in such a high regard, in particular when it came to corporate worship.<sup>31</sup> Musical instruments are part of the "shadows of the law" that are unsuitable for use in corporate worship including burning incense.<sup>32</sup> They are part of the "infancy of the Church"...when it was "under the legal

<sup>27</sup> "While the Orthodox speak of the fullness of man's sanctification in terms of his sharing in the life of God, using the term *theosis kata charin* (divination by grace), such language is not normally used by the Anglicans, some of whom regard it as dangerous and misleading." A. M. Allchin and Cicely M. Saunders, *Participation in God* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988). p. 3; cf. p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> "Calvin very rarely, if indeed ever, wrote about music independently of its relationship specifically to public communal worship or the praise of God in general." Charles Garside, "The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music: 1536-1543," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 69, no. 4 (1979). Cf. Begbie, *Resounding Truth : Christian Wisdom in the World of Music*. pp. 105-112.

<sup>29</sup> For a rigorous and very close reading of Calvin in regard to public worship see: R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession : Our Theology, Piety, and Practice* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 2008). Especially pp. 227-291. Cf. For more see O Taylor and W David, "John Calvin and Musical Instruments: A Critical Investigation," *Calvin Theological Journal* 48, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>30</sup> Paul S. Jones, "Calvin and Music," in David W. Hall and Marvin Padgett (eds.), *Calvin and Culture : Exploring a Worldview*, (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 2010), p. 235. For Calvin, singing the psalms could "incite us to lift up our hearts to God and move us to an ardour in invoking and exalting with praises the glory of his Name." *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Although for a more nuanced view see Taylor and David.

<sup>32</sup> Comm. Psalm 33.2, Jean Calvin, *Commentary on Psalms - Volume 1*, trans. Rev. James Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library). "When they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law." Cf. Robert Kingdon, "Worship in Geneva before and after the Reformation," in Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet (eds.), *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe : Change and Continuity in Religious Practice*, (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), pp. 41-62.

economy”<sup>33</sup> and can now be done away with.<sup>34</sup> Elsewhere, as Taylor points out, Calvin acknowledges the power of music to move hearts and inspire, but is nervous of this very power confusing the true worship of God:<sup>35</sup> “Calvin, like Augustine and Zwingli, downstream from Plato, fretted over [music’s] ability to distort the heart, despite his belief that Israel had benefitted from music’s affective powers.”<sup>36</sup> Calvin thus in his own church praxis had a preference for simplicity in aesthetics overall<sup>37</sup>, for anything more could “deprive the Church of the presence of Christ”<sup>38</sup>.

However, it is important to note that there is also a positive element to Calvin’s thinking about music and musical instruments. For example, musical instruments protect the worshipper from a ‘cold faith’.<sup>39</sup> Calvin elsewhere acknowledges the power of music to move hearts: “And in truth we know from experience that song has great force and vigour to arouse and inflame people’s hearts to invoke and praise God with a more vehement and ardent zeal”.<sup>40</sup> There is also present in his writings a belief in earthly worship participating in heavenly worship: we join the “company of angels...singing these divine and celestial hymns with the good King David.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Comm. Ps.149:3 *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Comm. Ps. 92.3 *ibid.* Cf. Instruments are “banished out of the churches by the plain command of the Holy Spirit”. Ps. 71.22 *ibid.* For discussion see, Taylor and David. p. 255. Cf. Instruments in worship are external and outward features of a service that “would be nothing but a silly performance now...[and]..would obscure the spiritual worship spoken of in the fourth chapter of St. John”. Jean Calvin, *Sermons on 2 Samuel: Chapters 1-13*, ed. trans. by Douglas Kelly (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992). p. 412; Cf. pp. 236, 310.

<sup>35</sup> Taylor and David. p. 254. See Calvin, *Sermons on 2 Samuel: Chapters 1-13*. pp. 234-39. See also Jeremy Begbie, “Music, Word and Theology Today: Learning from John Calvin,” in *Theology in Dialogue : The Impact of the Arts, Humanities, and Science on Contemporary Religious Thought : Essays in Honor of John W. De Gruchy*, ed. John W. De Gruchy, Lyn Holness, and Ralf K. Wüstenberg (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2002). pp. 24-27.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor and David. p. 266.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Aukst, “Simplicity and Silence: The Influence of Scripture on the Aesthetic Thought of the Major Reformers,” *Journal of Religious History* 10, no. 4 (1979).

<sup>38</sup> Comm. John, p.163.

<sup>39</sup> Calvin, *Sermons on 2 Samuel: Chapters 1-13*. p. 409.

<sup>40</sup> Calvin, “Epistle to the Reader”, in *Institutes* cited in Taylor and David, p. 267, fn. 118.

<sup>41</sup> Jean Calvin, *John Calvin : Writings on Pastoral Piety*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 2001). pp. 94-97.

Calvin clearly would not have authorized what today we know as P-C worship practice. The use of a such a range of instruments, the power and versatility enabled by the ‘band’, and the development of other production elements would have fallen foul of his drive towards simple ‘pure’ worship, free from the external ‘pomp’ and ceremony of the Roman Catholic Church. However, Calvin’s acknowledgment of music’s ability to move the heart, to warm faith, invoke praise and act as a vehicle by which our hearts are lifted up to God in worship, provide some key balance and validation to the appropriation of Calvin we have used. After all, singing became one of the key identity markers of those who came after Calvin, the ‘Calvinists’ of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Further empirical research*

This study, in being situated firmly within the theoretical, theological and prescriptive role, would benefit from the intersection of perspectives that studies from other disciplines would bring. In particular, fresh ethnographic research is much needed in the area of our specific interest – Charismatic worship within the Anglican church. No significant studies have been done in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Without such up-to-date information about church praxis, there is the risk that studies such as this one which rely on other ethnographic research, are not accurate enough representations of what is actually happening in the church. For a comprehensive understanding of emerging church praxis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a truly multi-disciplinary approach is needed - a new generation of research, observation, and theological reflection.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 5 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961). pp. 270-272. Cf. James Hastings Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968). pp. 38-40.

<sup>43</sup> From disciplines as wide-ranging as congregational studies, ritual studies, liturgical studies, social science and ethnography. See Porter, pp. 149, 154. Porter notes “It is...this intersection of perspectives which marks out the field as one with a great deal of latent potential”, p. 165. Cf. Monique Marie Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, and Thomas Wagner, eds., *Christian Congregational Music : Performance, Identity and Experience* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013). p. 11.

## 5. The future

We have seen then how a Reformed theology can fund an articulation of the deeper logic and grammar of P-C worship and spirituality, which, in turn, can be seen to function as ‘grace made visible’ – the life of Christ applied to the life of the believer by the power of the Spirit in an ascension movement towards ultimate completion: a Trinitarian Participatory Ontology of worship. What are the future research projects that could be done from this foundation?

### *P-C worship as icon*

For Radical Orthodoxy, “the sacramental life of the church is incarnationally reconceived so that the church’s liturgy serves as a particularly intensified iconic indicator of how the material and created order participates in the divine life and work of God”<sup>44</sup>. Further research could be undertaken asking to what extent our proposed ontology allows P-C worship to be understood similarly as an intensified iconic indicator of the Spirit’s personhood, freedom and role, acting upon, in, and through Creation’s participation in the triune God through Union with Christ. To what extent does P-C worship act as an *icon* of right relationality, orientation towards Maker, Sustainer and Perfecter – the Christian Triune God?

### *Union with Christ*

Further work could be done on Union with Christ as an under-utilised theology, looking beyond Calvin to, for example, Luther<sup>45</sup>, who spoke of a Union by faith more intimate than “a husband coupled to his wife”.<sup>46</sup> In particular, it would be fruitful to ask what the new Finnish

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<sup>44</sup> Yong, “Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal”, p. 237.

<sup>45</sup> See for example, Marcus Johnson, “Luther and Calvin on Union with Christ,” *Fides et Historia* 39:2 (Summer/Fall 2007), p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> “Faith couples Christ and me more intimately than a husband coupled to his wife.” Martin Luther, “Lectures on Galatians”, in *Luther’s Works*, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 1955), p. 65.

interpretation of Luther<sup>47</sup>, such as that of Mannermaa<sup>48</sup>, could say to P-C worship and the Trinitarian Participatory Ontology we have proposed? With his emphasis on the more mystical and ontological dimensions of Union with Christ, Mannermaa's work would be an interesting place to begin broadening the Reformed-Pentecostal worship dialogue begun in this project.

### *Singing as an 'accommodation' of God*

Although my project touches on this hypothesis, further work could be done to investigate the validity and fruitfulness of extending Calvin's notion of 'accommodation' to include singing.

## **6. Closing remarks**

The introduction stated that this project would walk a fine line between confidence and humility. My hope is that it will act as a signpost to others, a model, of confidently drinking from our own 'wells' as Pentecostals and Charismatics, whilst wisely recognising that our wells are filled by a deeper, more ancient water table that is the broader Catholic-Reformed tradition.

It feels fitting to end with the words of Father Corbon, writing on the deep mystery behind the liturgy but revealing a truth present in both Reformed theology and P-C praxis:

The Ascension is a decisive turning point. It does mark the end of something that is not simply to be cast aside: *the end of a relationship to Jesus that is still wholly*

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<sup>47</sup> Braaten and Jenson, *Union With Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*.

<sup>48</sup> Tuomo Mannermaa and Kirsi Irmeli Stjerna, *Christ Present in Faith : Luther's View of Justification*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

*external*...it marks the beginning of an entirely new relationship of faith and of a new time: the liturgy of the last times.<sup>49</sup>

May this 'liturgy of the last times' become more and more the dominant key of the Church's worship. We gather in worship not to merely remember Christ, to observe him from afar, but to participate in his risen life by the Spirit – an experience of extreme divine-human intimacy. May our gathered worship, regardless of tradition, always reflect this truth, after all: "...believers have no greater help than public worship" (4.1.5).

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<sup>49</sup> Corbon, p. 60.





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